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(54) **SYSTEMS AND METHODS FOR 1.5 BITS PER CELL CHARGE DISTRIBUTION**

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(58) **Field of Classification Search**
CPC G11C 11/22; G11C 11/21; G11C 11/223
See application file for complete search history.

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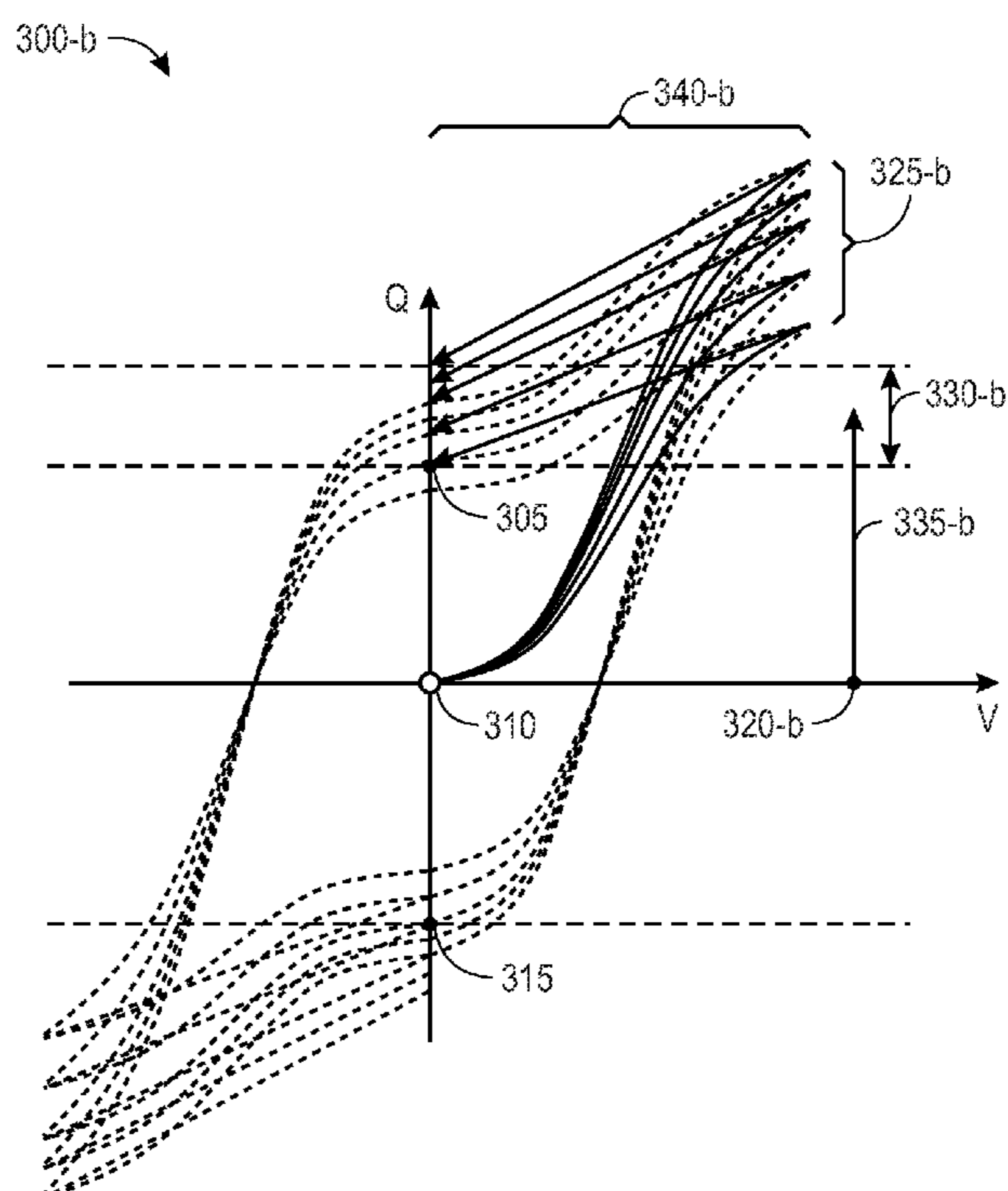
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(57) **ABSTRACT**

Memory cells are described that include two reference voltages that may store and sense three distinct memory states by compensating for undesired intrinsic charges affecting a memory cell. Although embodiments described herein refer to three memory states, it should be appreciated that in other embodiments, the memory cell may store or sense more than three charge distributions using the described methods and techniques. In a first memory state, a programming voltage or a sensed voltage may be higher than a first reference voltage and a second reference voltage. In a second memory state, the applied voltage or the sensed voltage may be between the first and the second reference voltages. In a third memory state, the applied voltage or the sensed voltage may be lower than the first and the second reference voltages. As such, the memory cell may store and retrieve three memory states.

20 Claims, 8 Drawing Sheets



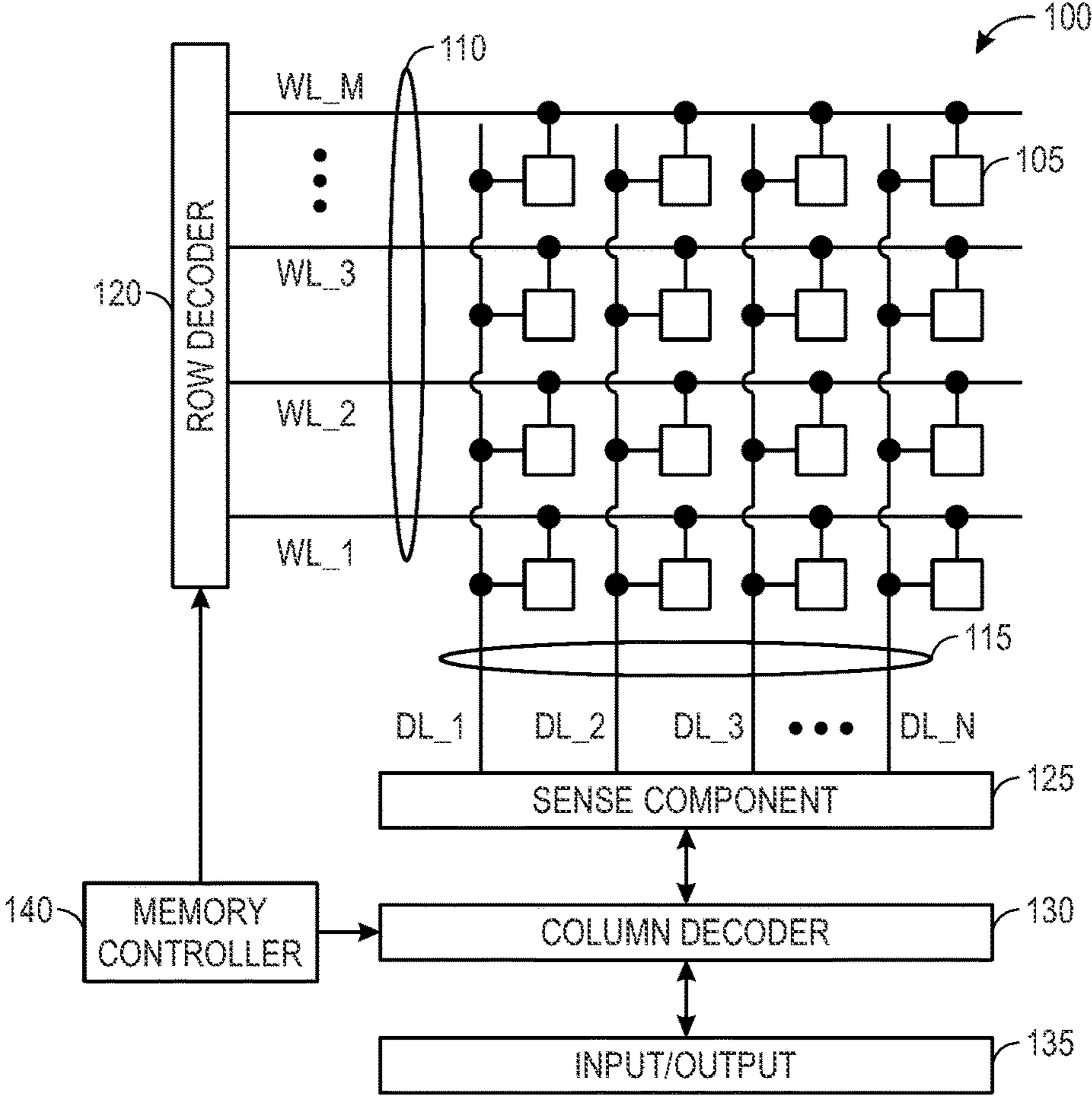


FIG. 1

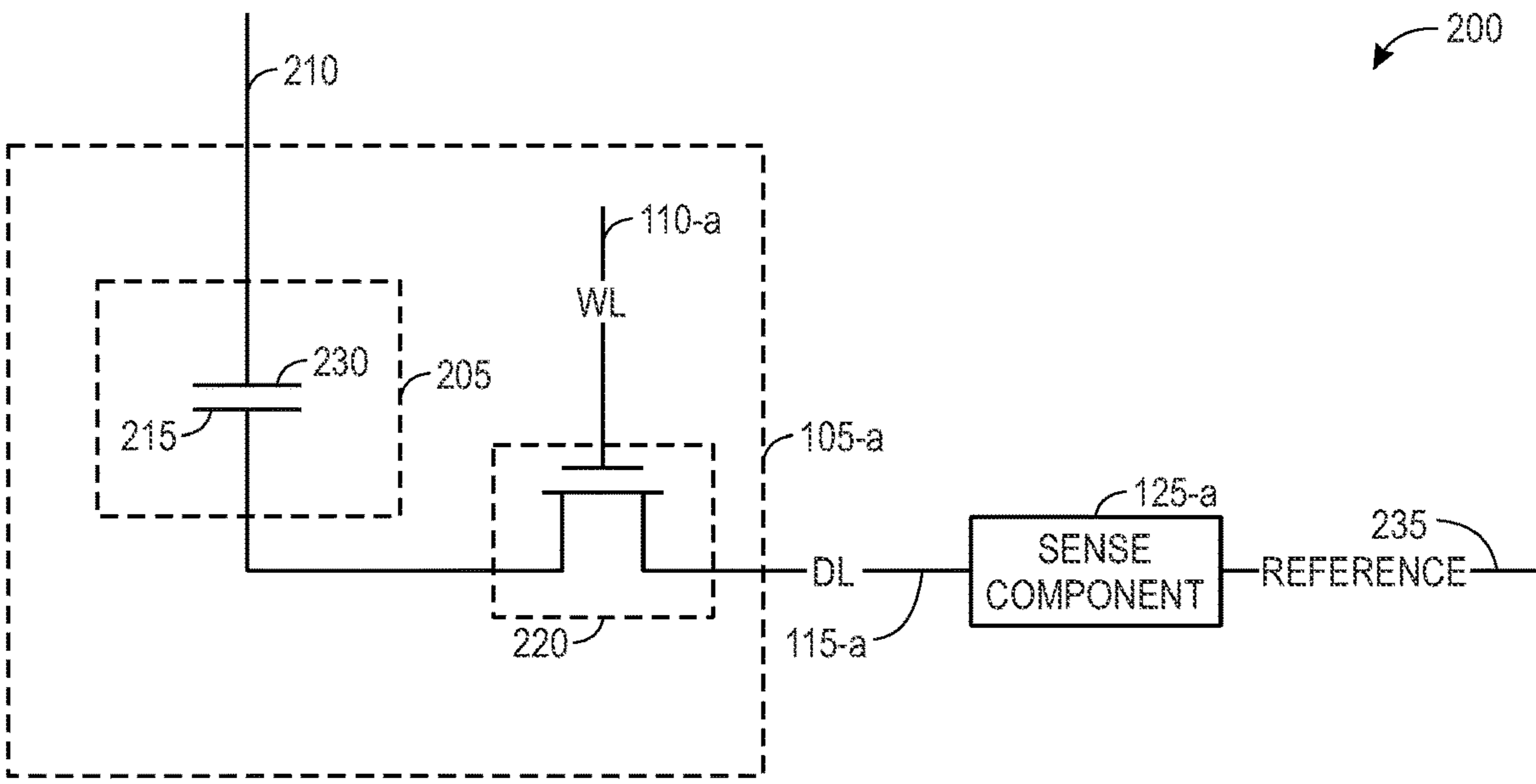


FIG. 2

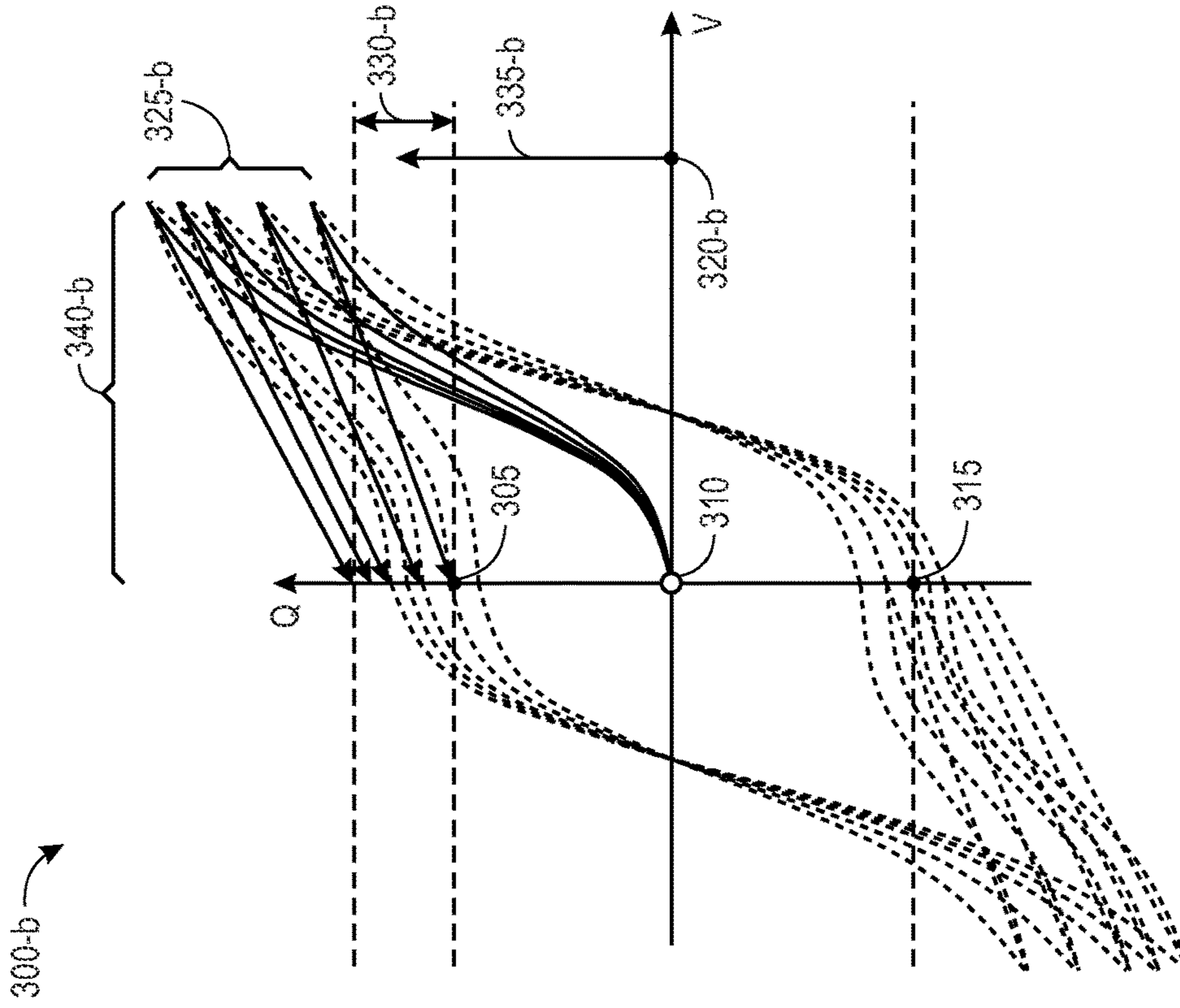


FIG. 3A

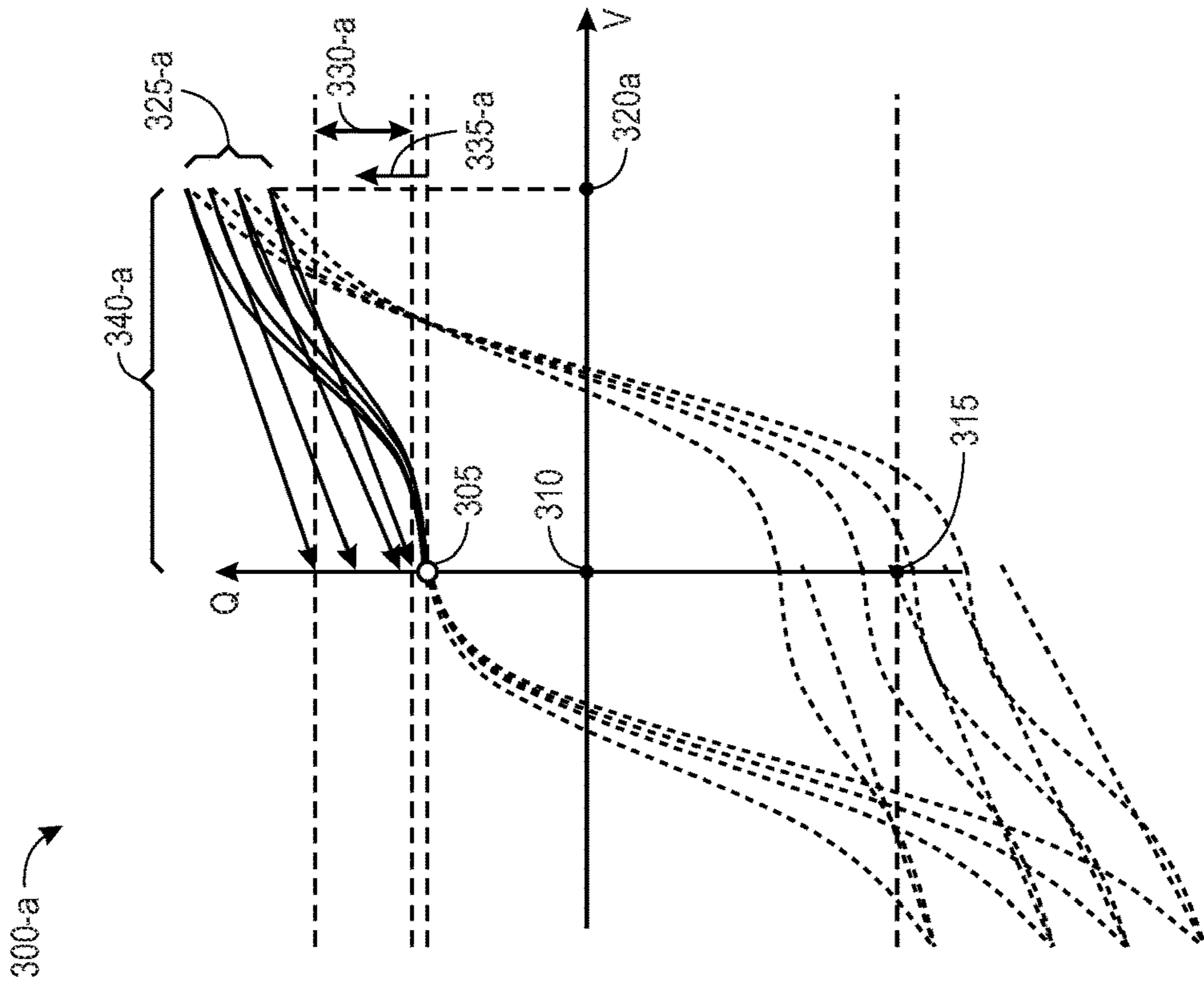


FIG. 3B

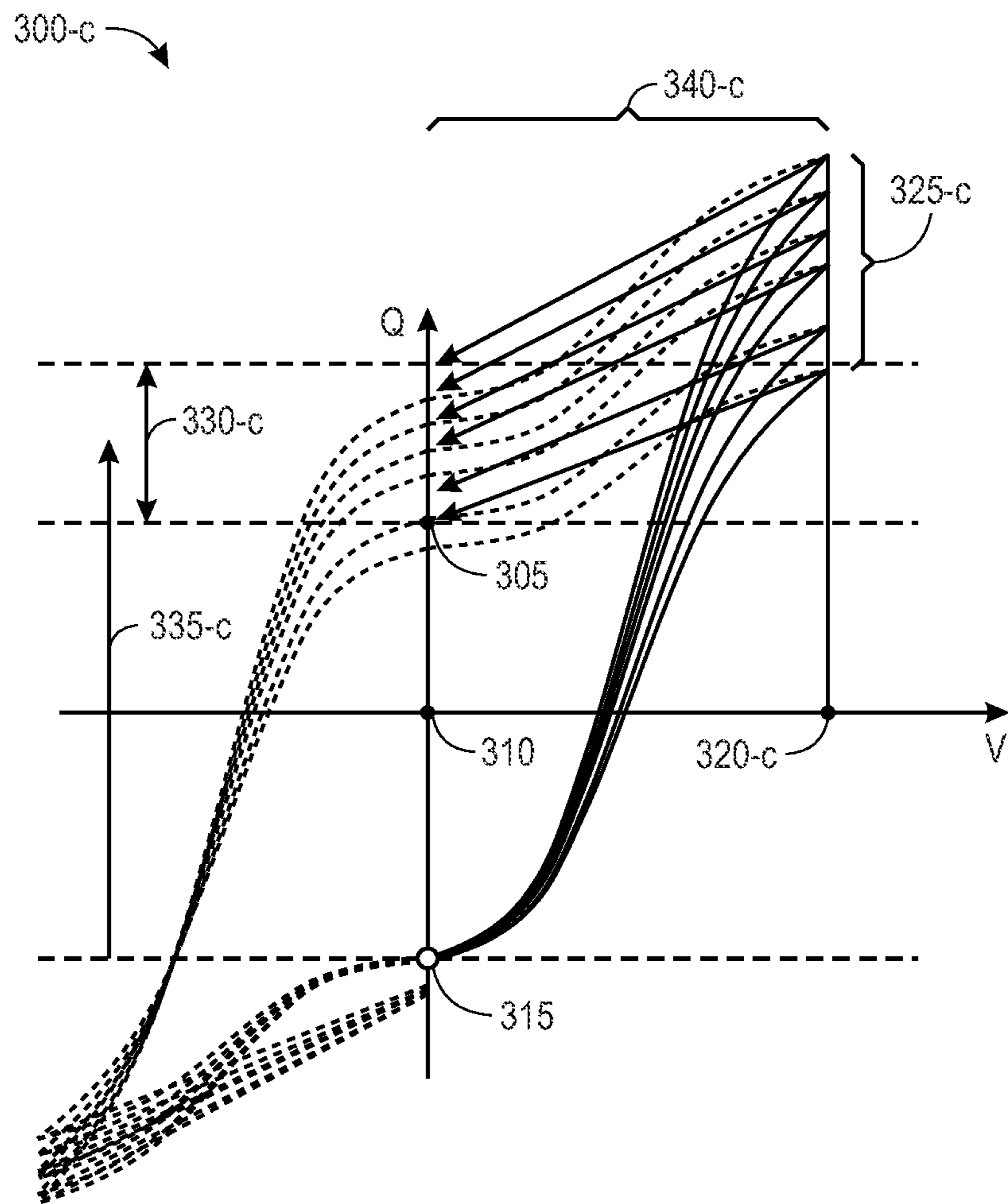


FIG. 3C

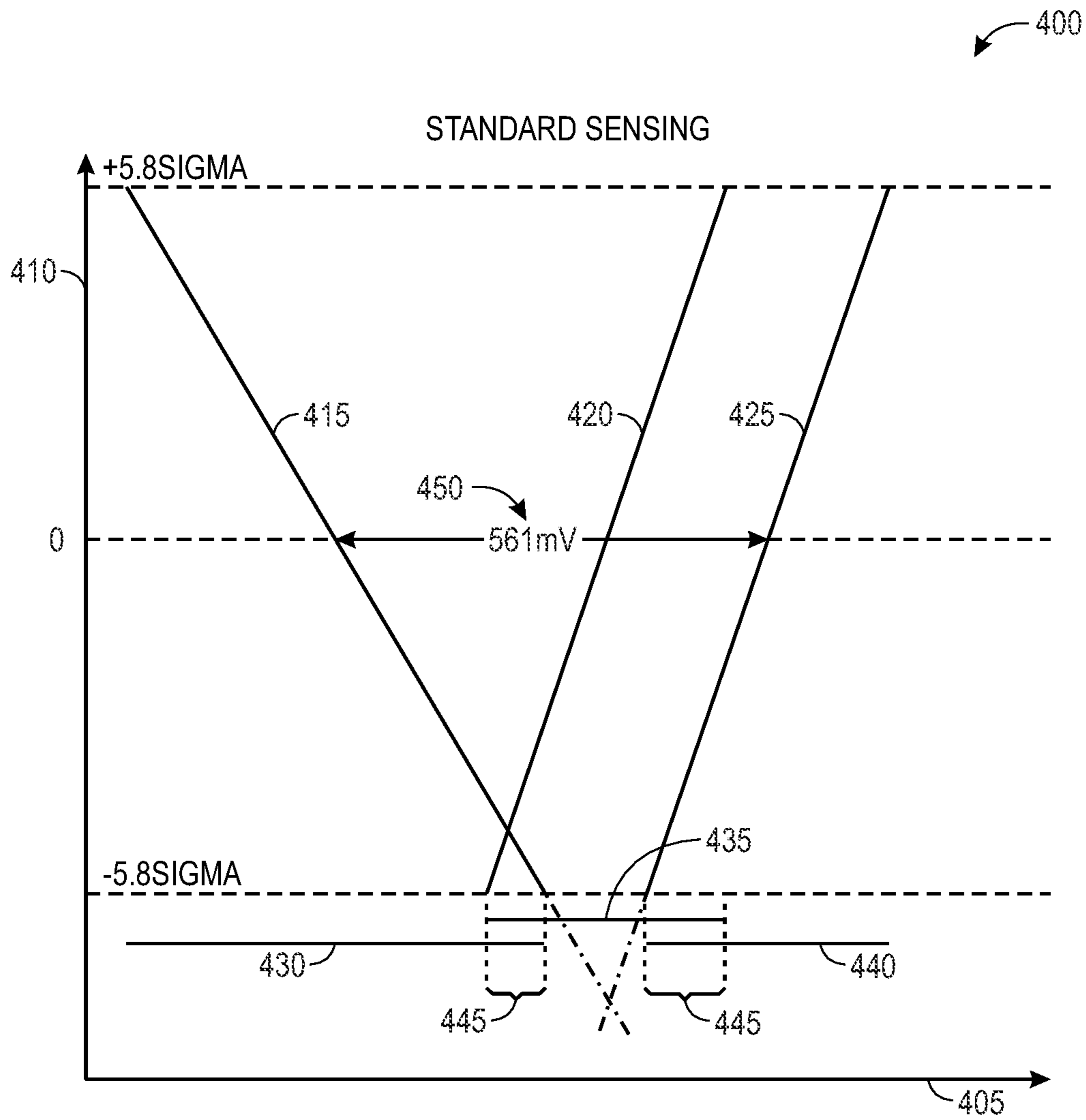


FIG. 4A

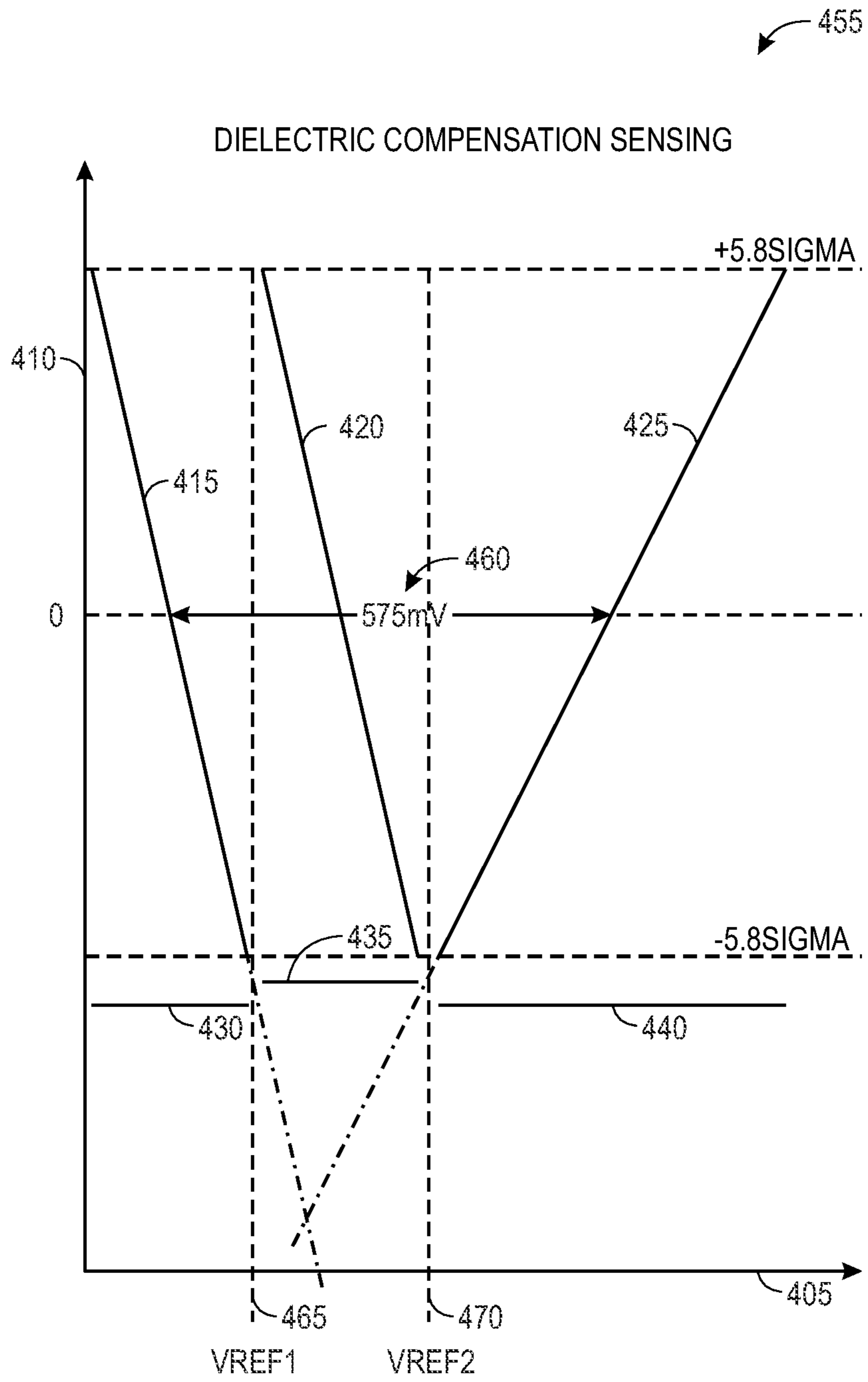


FIG. 4B

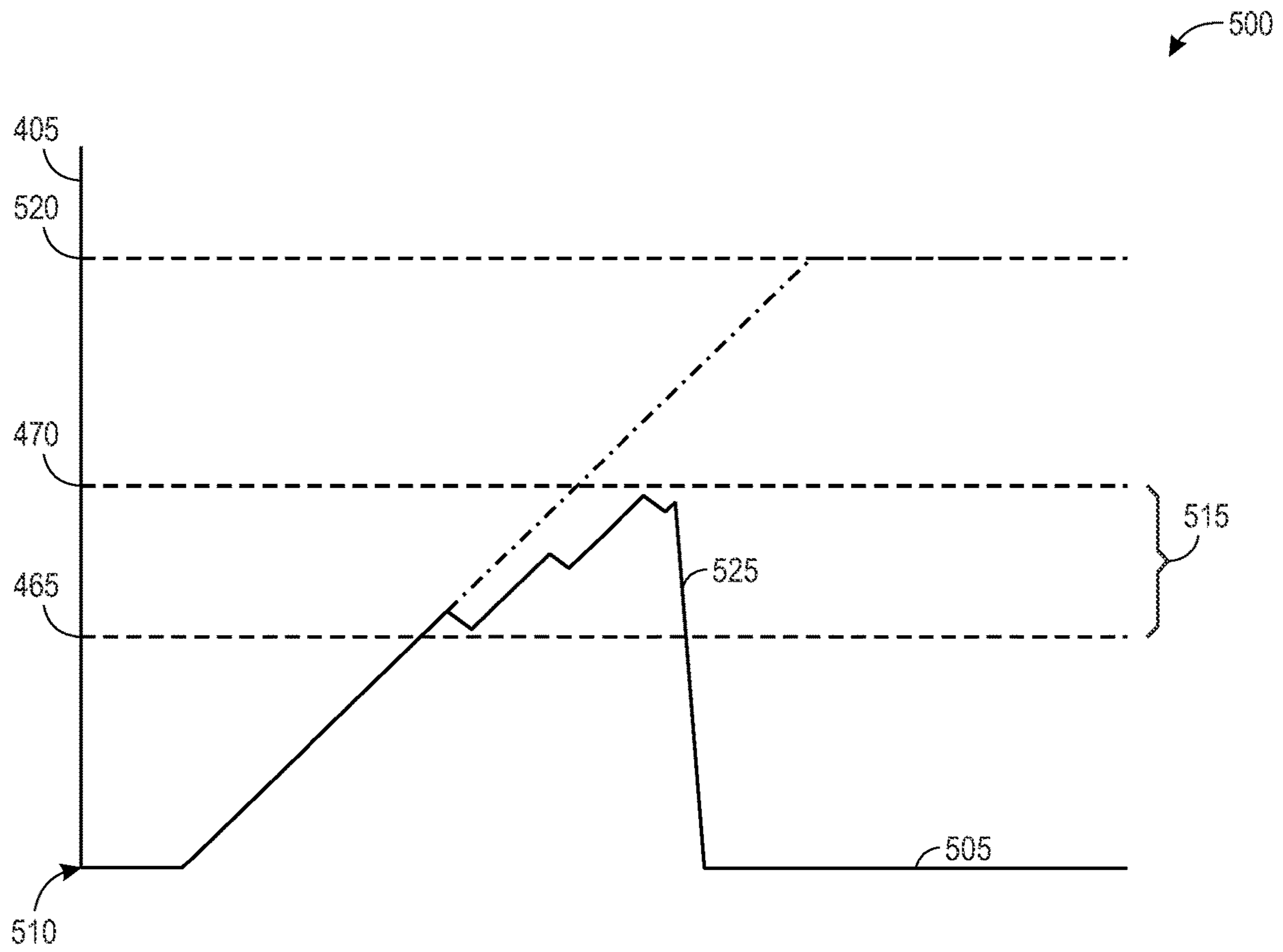


FIG. 5

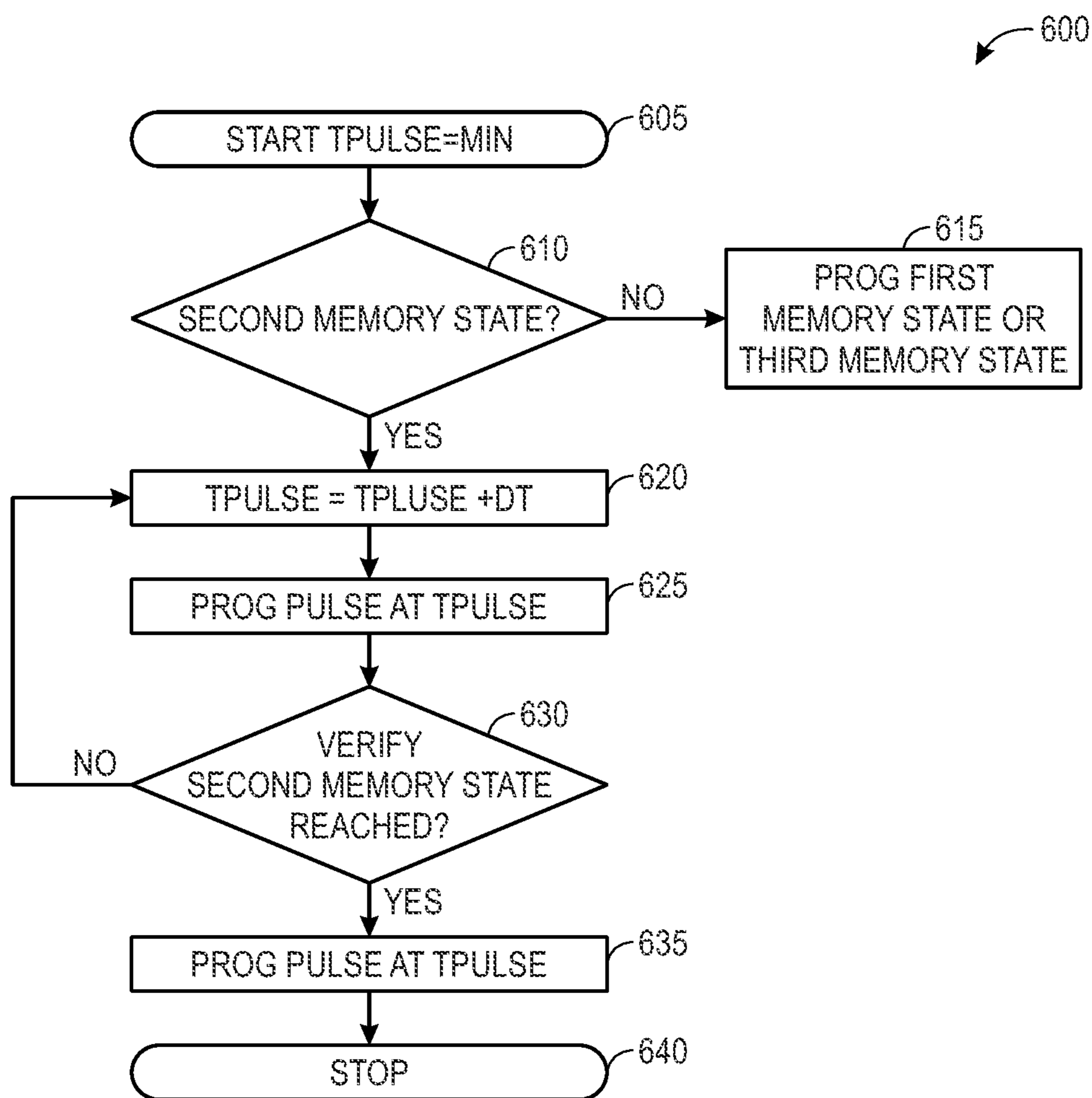


FIG. 6

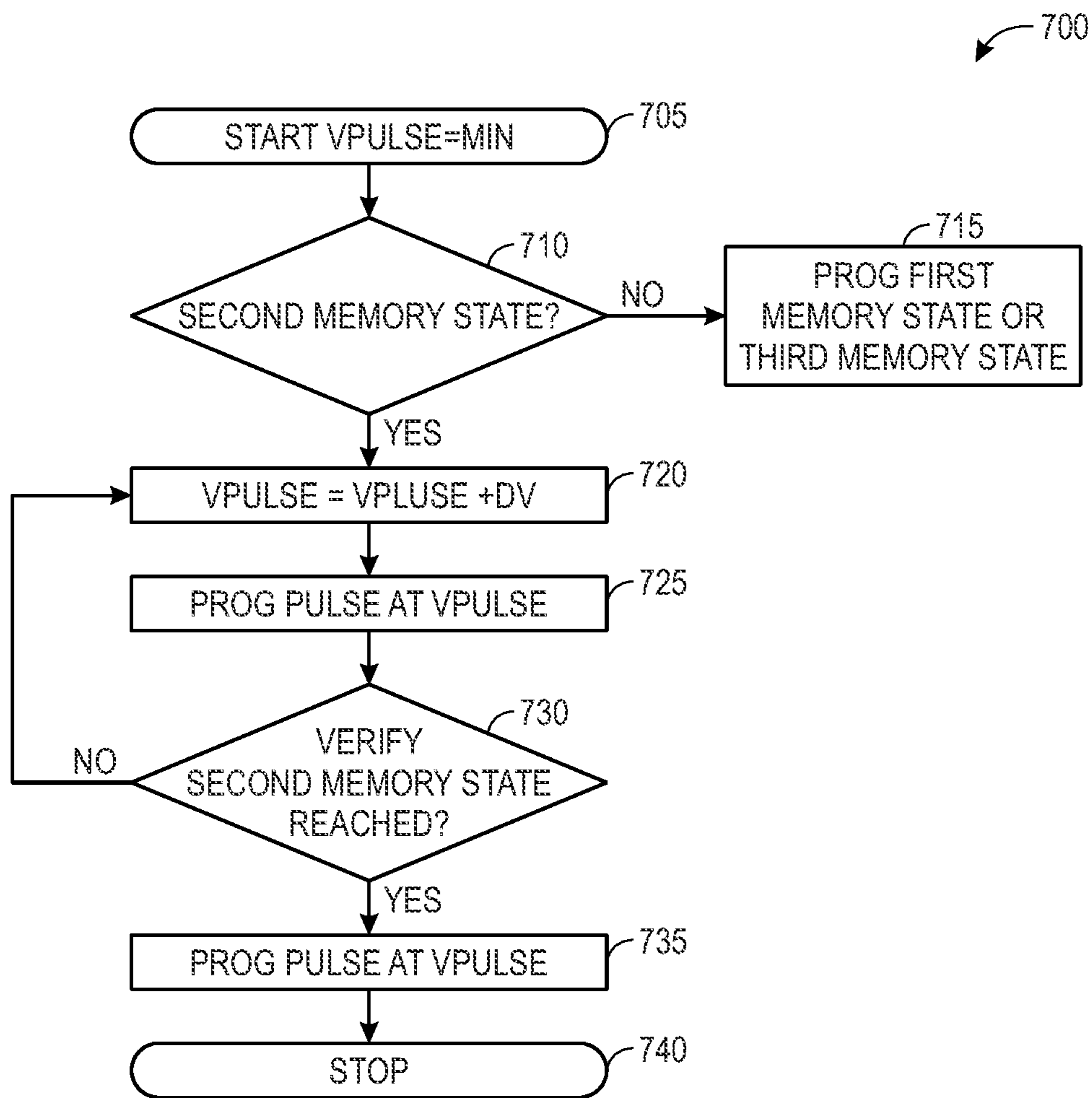


FIG. 7

SYSTEMS AND METHODS FOR 1.5 BITS PER CELL CHARGE DISTRIBUTION

BACKGROUND

This section is intended to introduce the reader to various aspects of art that may be related to various aspects of the present techniques, which are described and/or claimed below. This discussion is believed to be helpful in providing the reader with background information to facilitate a better understanding of the various aspects of the present disclosure. Accordingly, it should be understood that these statements are to be read in this light and not as admissions of prior art.

The following relates generally to memory devices and more specifically to multi-level accessing, sensing, and other operations for memory cells using multiple charges. The techniques and methods described herein may be used with ferroelectric memory devices or other type of memory devices. Memory devices are widely used to store information in various electronic devices such as computers, wireless communication devices, cameras, digital displays, and the like. Information is stored by programming different states of a memory device. For example, binary devices have two states, often denoted by a logic “1” or a logic “0.” In other systems, more than two states may be stored. To access the stored information, the electronic device may read, or sense, the stored state in the memory device. To store information, the electronic device may write, or program, the state in the memory device.

Various types of memory devices exist, including random access memory (RAM), read only memory (ROM), dynamic RAM (DRAM), synchronous dynamic RAM (SDRAM), ferroelectric RAM (FeRAM), magnetic RAM (MRAM), resistive RAM (RRAM), flash memory, and others. Memory devices may be volatile or non-volatile. Non-volatile memory, e.g., flash memory, can store data for extended periods of time even in the absence of an external power source. Volatile memory devices, e.g., DRAM, may lose their stored state over time unless they are periodically refreshed by an external power source. A binary memory device may, for example, include a charged or discharged capacitor. A charged capacitor may, however, become discharged over time through leakage currents, resulting in the loss of the stored information. Certain features of volatile memory may offer performance advantages, such as faster read or write speeds, while features of non-volatile memory, such as the ability to store data without periodic refreshing, may be advantageous. Some of the memory devices include memory cells that may be accessed by turning on a transistor that couples the memory cell (e.g., the capacitor) with a wordline or a bitline.

FeRAM may use similar device architectures as a volatile memory but may have non-volatile properties due to the use of a ferroelectric capacitor as a storage device. FeRAM devices may thus have improved performance compared to some other non-volatile and volatile memory devices. Some FeRAM relies on splitting sense windows of one storage mechanism to store memory bits, but doing so may provide for storing only 2 states per memory cell.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Various aspects of this disclosure may be better understood upon reading the following detailed description and upon reference to the drawings in which:

FIG. 1 is an example of a memory array that supports multi-level accessing, sensing, and other operations for ferroelectric memory, in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure;

FIG. 2 illustrates an example circuit that supports multi-level accessing, sensing, and other operations for a memory that stores and retrieves three memory states, in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure;

FIG. 3A depicts sensing operation of a first memory state of a memory cell for a memory that stores and retrieves three memory states, in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure;

FIG. 3B depicts sensing operation of a second memory state of the memory cell for a memory that stores and retrieves three memory states, in accordance with another embodiment of the present disclosure;

FIG. 3C depicts sensing operation of a third memory state of the memory cell for a memory that stores and retrieves three memory states, in accordance with yet another embodiment of the present disclosure;

FIG. 4A depicts a graph including a voltage distribution bar and a bit error rate distribution bar to illustrate a respective bit error ratio of a respective memory state when applying a respective sensing voltage, in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure;

FIG. 4B depicts a graph illustrating a first memory state error distribution, a second memory state error distribution, and a third memory state error distribution after compensation for the dielectric charge, in accordance with another embodiment of the present disclosure;

FIG. 5 depicts a graph illustrating a voltage ramp for programming three distinct memory states on the memory cell described above, in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure;

FIG. 6 is a method of implementing a specific charge amount associated with the first memory state, the second memory state, or the third memory state according to a pulse width timing method, as will be appreciated, in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure: and

FIG. 7 is a method of implementing a specific charge amount associated with the first memory state, the second memory state, or the third memory state by adjusting a programming voltage of memory cell, in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

When introducing elements of various embodiments of the present disclosure, the articles “a,” “an,” “the,” and “said” are intended to mean that there are one or more of the elements. The terms “comprising,” “including,” and “having” are intended to be inclusive and mean that there may be additional elements other than the listed elements. One or more specific embodiments of the present embodiments described herein will be described below. In an effort to provide a concise description of these embodiments, all features of an actual implementation may not be described in the specification. It should be appreciated that in the development of any such actual implementation, as in any engineering or design project, numerous implementation-specific decisions must be made to achieve the developers’ specific goals, such as compliance with system-related and business-related constraints, which may vary from one implementation to another. Moreover, it should be appreciated that such a development effort might be complex and time consuming, but would nevertheless be a routine under-

taking of design, fabrication, and manufacture for those of ordinary skill having the benefit of this disclosure.

Different memories may use different memory architectures to store and retrieve data bits using different memory states. In some embodiments, each memory state may refer to a distinct distribution of charges on a memory cell. For example, each memory cell of a ferroelectric random access memory (FeRAM) may include a ferroelectric capacitor including ferroelectric material. The ferroelectric capacitor may store memory states using charge dipoles of the memory cell (e.g., positive and negative charge distributions). A state of such memory cells may be written to or read from by applying a voltage. In specific embodiments, the applied voltage may flip the memory cell dipole. Such memory cells may use a reference voltage, as a threshold, to distinctively identify whether a positive or negative charge distribution (e.g., dipole) is being written or sensed. In some embodiments, an intermediary memory state (e.g., third memory state) may be programmed and sensed using an intermediary charge distribution between the positive and negative charge distributions.

In the embodiments described herein, memory cells are described that include two reference voltages that may store and sense three distinct memory states by compensating for undesired intrinsic charges affecting the memory cell. Although embodiments described herein refer to three memory states, it should be appreciated that in other embodiments, the memory cell may store or sense more than three charge distributions using the described methods and techniques. Moreover, in different embodiments, a FeRAM cell or other suitable memory types may implement the described methods and techniques.

A FeRAM cell may store a memory state by charging the respective capacitor using an applied voltage. The FeRAM cell may sense a stored memory state by discharging the respective capacitor and reading a resulting sensing voltage. The memory cell may identify the respective memory state by comparing the applied voltage or the sensing voltage to a first reference voltage and a second reference voltage. In a first memory state, the applied voltage (e.g., programming voltage) or the sensed voltage (e.g., resulting voltage when sensing a stored memory state) may be higher than the first reference voltage and the second reference voltage. In a second memory state, the applied voltage or the sensed voltage may be between the first reference voltage and the second reference voltage. In a third memory state, the applied voltage or the sensed voltage may be lower than the first reference voltage and the second reference voltage. As such, the memory cell (e.g., ferroelectric memory cell) may store and retrieve three memory states.

Referring now to FIG. 1, a memory array 100 that supports multi-level accessing, sensing, and other operations for ferroelectric memory is illustrated in accordance with various examples of the present disclosure. The memory array 100 includes a number of memory cells, including a memory cell 105, that are programmable to store different states. The memory cell 105 may be programmable. In some embodiment, the memory cell 105 may store three memory states. In other embodiment, the memory cell 105 may store more than three memory states using the methods and techniques below.

The memory cell 105 may include a capacitor that has a ferroelectric as the dielectric material to store a charge representative of the programmable states. For example, the capacitor may represent three memory states using three distinct charge levels. In some embodiments, the dielectric material may accumulate intrinsic charges during memory

operations. Such dielectric intrinsic charges may interfere with the capacitor charges when reading or writing a memory state. In different embodiments, intrinsic charges may accumulate on other portions of the memory cell 105 as well.

The memory cell 105 may store multiple charge levels using the ferroelectric capacitor to represent multiple memory states by compensating for the dielectric intrinsic charges. That is, by compensating for the dielectric intrinsic charges, the memory cell 105 may prevent interference between the three charge states. In some embodiments, the memory array 100 may implement plate pulse technique to compensate for dielectric intrinsic charges of one or more memory cells 105 when reading or writing data. For example, the memory array 100 may include circuitry to compensate for dielectric charges of the one or more memory cells 105. In another example, the one or more memory cells 105 may include additional circuitry to perform dielectric compensation.

In some embodiments, the multiple charge levels may require applying different voltage levels to perform memory operations. Memory operations, such as reading and writing memory states, may be performed on the memory cell 105 by activating or selecting the appropriate word line 110 and digit line 115. Activating or selecting a word line 110 or a digit line 115 may include applying a voltage to the respective lines. Word lines 110 and digit lines 115 are made of conductive materials. For example, word lines 110 and digit lines 115 may be made of metals (such as copper, aluminum, gold, tungsten, etc.), metal alloys, other conductive materials, or the like. According to the example of FIG. 1, each row of the memory cells is connected to a single word line 110, and each column of the memory cells is connected to a single digit line 115.

By applying a voltage to the word line 110 and the digit line 115, a single memory cell may be activated (or accessed) at their intersection. Accessing such memory cell may include performing reading or writing operation on the memory cell. The intersection of a word line 110 and digit line 115 may be referred to as an address of a respective memory cell. For example, a read operation may include sensing multiple charge levels from the memory cell 105. The operations may include compensating for the dielectric charge to reduce an amount of undesired intrinsic charges and allow sensing of multiple charge levels.

In some embodiment, the read operations may include specific bit sensing techniques with respect to a first reference voltage and a second reference voltage associated with reading from and/or writing to the memory cell 105 using multiple charge levels. The first reference voltage and the second reference voltage may facilitate indicating three memory states. For example, the read operations may include providing a voltage to discharge the memory cell 105 capacitor and comparing a resulting induced voltage (i.e., sensed voltage) to the first reference voltage and the second reference voltage. The memory cell 105 may include circuitry to compare the sensed voltage with the two reference voltages and facilitate indicating a first memory state, a second memory state, and a third memory state.

In some examples, a read operation may be performed based at least in part on a polarity of the polarization charge from the memory cell 105 indicated by the resulting induced voltage. That is, the first memory state may include a charge with positive polarization, the second memory state may include a charge with neutral polarization, and the third memory state may include a charge with negative polarization. Each of the polarization charges may induce a respec-

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tive sensing voltage when performing the read operation. In some examples, the read operation may include accessing a cell to determine a polarity of a stored charge at a first time that may indicate an initial memory state and providing a respective programming voltage to alter the charge polarity according to acquire a target memory state. In some cases, the reading operations of the different charge-related information may be performed concurrently, in overlapping intervals, in series, in continuous intervals, or in parallel.

In some architectures, the memory state storage of the memory cell 105 (e.g., the capacitor) may be electrically isolated from the digit line by a selection component. The word line 110 may be connected to and may control the selection component. For example, the selection component may be a transistor and the word line 110 may be connected to the gate of the transistor. Activating the word line 110 results in an electrical connection or closed circuit between the capacitor of a memory cell 105 and its corresponding digit line 115. The digit line 115 may then be accessed to either read or write the memory cell 105. In some examples, the word line 110 may be activated multiple times to facilitate sensing. In some cases, the word line 110 may be activated a first time to facilitate sensing of a first charge of a first type (e.g., dielectric charge) and a second time to facilitate sensing of a second charge of a second type (e.g., polarization charge). In some cases, the first time and the second time may be discontinuous or separated in time.

Accessing the memory cell 105 may be controlled through a respective row decoder 120 and a respective column decoder 130. In some examples, a row decoder 120 receives a row address from the memory controller 140 and activates the appropriate word line 110 based on the received row address. Similarly, a column decoder 130 receives a column address from the memory controller 140 and activates the appropriate digit line 115. For example, memory array 100 may include multiple word lines 110, labeled WL_1 through WL_M, and multiple digit lines 115, labeled DL_1 through DL_N, where M and N depend on the array size. Thus, by activating a word line 110 and a digit line 115, e.g., WL_2 and DL_3, the memory cell 105 at their intersection may be accessed.

Upon accessing, the memory cell 105 may be read, or sensed, by sense component 125 to determine the stored state of the memory cell 105. For example, after accessing the memory cell 105, the ferroelectric capacitor of the memory cell 105 may discharge a first charge (e.g., a dielectric charge) onto its corresponding digit line 115. In other examples, after accessing the memory cell 105, the ferroelectric capacitor of memory cell 105 may discharge a second or third charge (e.g., a polarization charge) onto its corresponding digit line 115. Discharging the ferroelectric capacitor may be based on biasing, or applying a voltage, to the ferroelectric capacitor.

As described above, the discharging may induce a change in the voltage of the digit line 115, which sense component 125 may compare to a reference voltage (not shown) in order to determine the stored state of the memory cell 105. For example, if digit line 115 has a higher voltage than the reference voltage, then sense component 125 may determine that the stored state in the memory cell 105 is related to a first predefined memory state. In some cases, the first memory state may include a state 1, or may be another value—including other logic values associated with multi-level sensing that enables storing more than two values (e.g., 3 states per cell or 1.5 bits per cell) In some examples, predefined encoding logic values may be mapped into memory cell states for writing to and reading from the

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memory cell as described with reference to aspects of the present disclosure. The sense component 125 may include various transistors or amplifiers in order to detect and amplify a difference in the signals, which may be referred to as latching. The detected logic state of the memory cell 105 may then be output through column decoder 130 as output 135.

In some examples, detecting and amplifying a difference in the signals, may include latching a first charge that is the sensed in sense component 125 at a first time. One example of this first charge may include latching a dielectric charge associated with the memory cell 105. As an example, the sense component 125 may sense a dielectric charge associated with the memory cell 105. The sensed dielectric charge may be latched in a latch within the sense component 125 or a separate latch that is in electronic communication with the sense component 125.

In some examples, detecting and amplifying a difference in the signals, may include latching a second charge that is sensed in the sense component 125 at a second time. One example of this second charge may include the polarization charges associated with the memory cell 105. The first and second charges may indicate either of the first memory state, the second memory state, or the third memory state. As an example, the sense component 125 may sense a polarization charge associated with the memory cell 105. The sensed polarization charge may be latched in a latch within the sense component 125 or a separate latch that is in electronic communication with the sense component 125. In other cases, this second charge is not latched, but is rewritten back to the memory cell 105.

The memory cell 105 may be set, or written, by activating the relevant word line 110 and digit line 115. As discussed above, activating a word line 110 electrically connects the corresponding row of memory cells to their respective digit lines 115. By controlling the relevant digit line 115 while the word line 110 is activated, the memory cell 105 may be written—i.e., a memory state may be stored in the memory cell 105. The column decoder 130 may accept data, for example input 135, to be written to the memory cells 105. The memory cell 105 may be written by applying a voltage across the ferroelectric capacitor. This process is discussed in more detail below. In some examples, the memory cell 105 may be written to include multiple charges after a read operation (e.g., based on a write-back operation).

In some cases, the memory cell 105 may be written after a read operation to write back data that has been read from the cell (or, alternatively, from other cells in some cases) or to refresh data. In some cases, a write operation may include writing a first charge (e.g., a first polarization charge) and a second charge (e.g., a dielectric compensation charge) to the memory cell 105. In some cases, writing one charge to the memory cell 105 may be based on a voltage of a cell plate relative to a voltage of one or more other components (e.g., a sense amplifier). In some cases, writing a first charge (e.g., a polarization charge) to a memory cell may occur before, during an overlapping interval, or at the same time as writing the second charge (e.g., a dielectric compensation charge) to the memory cell. In some cases, a write operation may be based on setting a polarization state, a dielectric state, or both, or by flipping one or more digits using cell or component selection.

In some memory architectures, accessing the memory cell 105 may degrade or destroy the stored logic state and re-write or refresh operations may be performed to return the original logic state to the memory cell 105. In DRAM, for example, the capacitor may be partially or completely dis-

charged during a sense operation, corrupting the stored logic state. As such, the logic state may be re-written after a sense operation. Additionally, activating a single word line **110** may result in the discharge of all memory cells in the row; thus, several or all memory cells in the row may need to be re-written.

Some memory architectures, including DRAM, may lose their stored state over time unless they are periodically refreshed by an external power source. For example, a charged capacitor may become discharged over time through leakage currents, resulting in the loss of the stored information. The refresh rate of these so-called volatile memory devices may be relatively high, e.g., tens of refresh operations per second for DRAM arrays, which may result in significant power consumption. With increasingly larger memory arrays, increased power consumption may inhibit the deployment or operation of memory arrays (e.g., power supplies, heat generation, material limits, etc.), especially for mobile devices that rely on a finite power source, such as a battery. As discussed below, the ferroelectric memory cells (e.g., memory cells **105**) may have beneficial properties that may result in improved performance relative to other memory architectures.

For example, the ferroelectric memory cells may allow for storage of multiple charges. Storing these different states may allow for multi-level accessing, sensing, and other operations based on the charges, for example, by segmenting or dividing a related sense window. For example, as described above, the ferroelectric memory cells may store a positive polarity, a negative polarity, or a neutral charge distribution polarity. By performing various operations, the polarity and the value of each charge may be sensed and determined—allowing for multi-level storage and sensing. In some cases, this storage and sensing may be based on a dielectric-related charge compensation to allow storage of multiple distinct charge distributions to indicate multiple memory states. For example, a plate pulse technique may allow for storage and sensing of three or more distinct charge distributions indicative of three or more memory states.

The memory controller **140** may control the operation (e.g., read, write, re-write, refresh, etc.) of the memory cells **105** through the various components, such as the row decoder **120**, the column decoder **130**, and the sense component **125**. The memory controller **140** may generate row and column address signals in order to activate the desired word line **110** and digit line **115**. The memory controller **140** may also provide and control various voltage levels used during the operation of memory array **100**. In general, the amplitude, shape, or duration of an applied voltage discussed herein may be adjusted or varied and may be different for the various operations for operating the memory array **100**. Furthermore, one, multiple, or all memory cells within the memory array **100** may be accessed simultaneously; for example, multiple or all cells of the memory array **100** may be accessed simultaneously during a reset operation in which all memory cells, or a group of memory cells, are set to a single logic state.

FIG. **2** illustrates a circuit **200** that supports multi-level accessing, sensing, and other operations for ferroelectric memory in accordance with various examples of the present disclosure. The circuit **200** includes a ferroelectric memory cell **105-a**, word line **110-a**, digit line **115-a**, and sense component **125-a**, which may be examples of the memory cell **105**, word line **110**, digit line **115**, and sense component **125**, respectively, as described with reference to FIG. **1**.

The ferroelectric memory cell **105-a** may include a logic storage component, such as ferroelectric capacitor **205** that has a first plate, cell plate **230**, and a second plate, cell bottom **215**. The cell plate **230** and the cell bottom **215** may be capacitively coupled through a ferroelectric material positioned between them. The orientation of cell plate **230** and cell bottom **215** may be flipped without changing the operation of the ferroelectric memory cell **105-a**. The circuit **200** may also include a selection component **220**, a first reference voltage **225**, and a second reference voltage **235**. In the example of FIG. **2**, the cell plate **230** may be accessed via the plate line **210** and the cell bottom **215** may be accessed via the digit line **115-a**. As described above, various states may be stored by charging or discharging the ferroelectric capacitor **205**.

The stored state of the ferroelectric capacitor **205** may be read or sensed by operating various elements represented in the circuit **200**. The ferroelectric capacitor **205** may be in electronic communication with the digit line **115-a**. For example, the ferroelectric capacitor **205** can be isolated from the digit line **115-a** when the selection component **220** is deactivated, and the ferroelectric capacitor **205** can be connected to the digit line **115-a** when the selection component **220** is activated. Activating the selection component **220** may be referred to as selecting the ferroelectric memory cell **105-a**.

In some cases, the selection component **220** is a transistor and its operation is controlled by applying a voltage to the transistor gate, where the voltage magnitude is greater than the threshold magnitude of the transistor. The word line **110-a** may activate the selection component **220**; for example, a voltage applied to the word line **110-a** is applied to the transistor gate, connecting the ferroelectric capacitor **205** with the digit line **115-a**.

In an alternative embodiment, the positions of the selection component **220** and the ferroelectric capacitor **205** may be switched, such that the selection component **220** is connected between the plate line **210** and the cell plate **230** and such that the ferroelectric capacitor **205** is between the digit line **115-a** and the other terminal of selection component **220**. In this embodiment, the selection component **220** may remain in electronic communication with the digit line **115-a** through the ferroelectric capacitor **205**. This configuration may be associated with alternative timing and biasing for read and write operations.

In an example operation of the ferroelectric memory cell **105-a**, a fixed or constant voltage may be applied to the cell plate **230** using the plate line **210**—e.g., the fixed voltage may be half of the voltage supplied to the sense component **125-a**. That is, the voltage applied to the plate line **210** may remain at a fixed voltage and may not be varied. This operation may be referred to as “fixed cell plate.” In order to read the memory state of the ferroelectric memory cell **105-a**, the digit line **115-a** may be virtually grounded and subsequently isolated from virtual ground prior to applying a voltage to the word line **110-a**.

As mentioned above, selecting the ferroelectric memory cell **105-a** may result in a voltage difference across the ferroelectric capacitor **205**, since the plate line **210** is held at a finite voltage and the digit line **115-a** is virtually grounded. The voltage difference may be the induced voltage or sensed voltage discussed above. Moreover, the voltage difference value may refer to one of multiple sensing voltages, corresponding to one of multiple distinct charge distributions in the ferroelectric memory cell **105-a**, and indicative of the multiple memory states. As a result, the voltage of the digit line **115-a** may change, e.g., become some finite value. In

some embodiments, this induced voltage may be compared at the sense component **125-a** with a first reference voltage and a second reference voltage to determine a first, second, or third memory state. In other embodiments, the induced voltage may be compared to more than two reference voltages to identify between a different number of memory states.

Due to the ferroelectric material between the plates of the ferroelectric capacitor **205**, and as discussed in more detail below, the ferroelectric capacitor **205** may not discharge upon connection to the digit line **115-a**. In one scheme, to sense the logic state stored by the ferroelectric capacitor **205**, the word line **110-a** may be biased to select the ferroelectric memory cell **105-a** and a voltage may be applied to the plate line **210**. In some cases, digit line **115-a** is virtually grounded and then isolated from the virtual ground (i.e., “floating”) prior to biasing plate line **210** and word line **110-a**.

Biasing plate line **210** may result in a voltage difference (e.g., plate line **210** voltage minus digit line **115-a** voltage) across the ferroelectric capacitor **205**. The voltage difference may yield a change in the stored charge on the ferroelectric capacitor **205**, where the magnitude of the change in stored charge may depend on the initial state of the ferroelectric capacitor **205**—e.g., whether the initial state stored a predefined logic value (e.g., the first memory state, the second memory state, the third memory state, etc.). This may induce a change in the voltage of digit line **115-a** based on the charge stored on the ferroelectric capacitor **205**.

The change in voltage of the digit line **115-a** may depend on its intrinsic capacitance (e.g., ferroelectric dielectric capacitance)—as charge flows through the digit line **115-a**, some finite charge may be stored in the digit line **115-a** and the resulting voltage depends on the intrinsic capacitance. The intrinsic capacitance may depend on physical characteristics, including the dimensions, of the digit line **115-a**. The digit line **115-a** may connect to a number of memory cells and the digit line **115-a** may have a length that results in a non-negligible capacitance (e.g., on the order of picofarads (pF)). The resulting voltage of the digit line **115-a** may then be compared to the reference voltages (e.g., the first reference voltage **225** and the second memory state **235**) by the sense component **125-a** in order to determine the stored memory state in the ferroelectric memory cell **105-a**.

The sense component **125-a** may include various transistors or amplifiers to detect and amplify a difference in signals. For example, the sense component **125-a** may include an amplifier that receives, amplifies, and outputs the voltage of digit line **115-a**. A first and a second latch circuits may receive and compare the amplified voltage with the first reference voltage **225** and the second reference voltage **235** to provide output signals to indicate the first memory state, the second memory state, or the third memory state.

In a first example, when the digit line **115-a** has a voltage higher than the first reference signal **225** and the second reference voltage **235**, the first and second latch circuit outputs may be driven to a logic high voltage. In the first example, the voltage of the digit line **115-a** may be referred to as a first sensing voltage. In a memory write operation, the logic high voltage of the first and second latch circuits may facilitate writing (or programming) the first memory state to the ferroelectric memory cell **105-a**, as will be appreciated. As such, the ferroelectric memory cell **105-a** may accumulate a first amount of charge within the positive charge distribution range.

In a second example, when the digit line **115-a** has a voltage higher than the first reference signal **225** and lower than the second reference voltage **235**, the first latch circuit

output may be driven to a logic high voltage and the second latch circuit output may be driven to a logic low voltage. In the second example, the voltage of the digit line **115-a** may be referred to as a second sensing voltage lower than and distinct from the first sensing voltage. In a memory write operation, the logic high voltage of the first latch circuit and the logic low voltage of the second latch circuit may facilitate writing (or programming) the second memory state to the ferroelectric memory cell **105-a**, as will be appreciated. As such, the ferroelectric memory cell **105-a** may accumulate a second amount of charge within the neutral charge distribution range. In different embodiments, the neutral charge distribution may include different charge distribution ranges between the positive and the negative charge distributions.

In a third example, when the digit line **115-a** has a voltage lower than the first reference signal **225** and the second reference voltage **235**, the first and second latch circuit outputs may be driven to a logic low voltage. In the third example, the voltage of the digit line **115-a** may be referred to as a third sensing voltage lower than and distinct from the first sensing voltage and the second sensing voltage. In a memory write operation, the logic low voltage of the first and second latch circuits may facilitate writing (or programming) the third memory state to the ferroelectric memory cell **105-a**, as will be appreciated. As such, the ferroelectric memory cell **105-a** may accumulate a third amount of charge within the negative charge distribution range. In different embodiments, the negative charge distribution may include different charge distribution ranges lower than the positive and the neutral charge distributions. It should be appreciated that the mention of positive, neutral, and, negative charge distributions are relative and in different embodiments, distinct charge distributions with different charge distribution ranges may be used.

With regard to the fixed cell plate scheme, writing on the ferroelectric memory cell **105-a** may include activating the selection component **220** and biasing the cell bottom **215** using the digit line **115-a**. In some cases, the fixed voltage magnitude of the cell plate **230** may be a value between the supply voltages of the sense component **125-a**. The sense component **125-a** may be used to drive the voltage of the digit line **115-a** to the first sensing voltage, the second sensing voltage, or the third sensing voltage. It should be appreciated that more than three sensing voltages may be implemented in other embodiments.

For instance, to write a first predefined logic value related to a polarization value (e.g., a state 0, or the first memory state of three or more possible values), the cell bottom **215** may be taken low, that is, the voltage of the digit line **115-a** may be driven to the low supply voltage. Moreover, to write a second predefined memory state related to a polarization value (e.g., the second memory state, or a second predefined logic value of three or more possible values), the cell bottom **215** may be taken high—e.g., the voltage of the digit line **115-a** may be driven to the high supply voltage.

To write to the ferroelectric memory cell **105-a**, a voltage may be applied across the ferroelectric capacitor **205** to induce accumulation of the respective amount of charges. Various methods may be used to induce accumulation of the respective amount of charges. In one example, the selection component **220** may be activated through word line **110-a** in order to electrically connect the ferroelectric capacitor **205** to the digit line **115-a**. A voltage may be applied across the ferroelectric capacitor **205** by controlling the voltage of the cell plate **230** (through the plate line **210**) and the cell bottom **215** (through the digit line **115-a**). The differential voltage

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between the cell plate **230** and the cell bottom **215** may be driven to the first sensing voltage to write the first memory state (or a first predefined logic value of three or more possible values).

A similar process may be performed to write the second and third memory states. That is, the differential voltage between the cell plate **230** and the cell bottom **215** may be driven to a voltage within the second sensing voltage or the third sensing voltage respectively. As such, the first amount of charges, the second amount of charges, or the third amount of charges may be induced to the ferroelectric memory cell **105-a**, as will be appreciated.

FIG. **3A**, FIG. **3B**, and FIG. **3C** illustrate examples of electrical properties of ferroelectric memory cells with hysteresis curves **300-a**, **300-b**, and **300-c**, and may be collectively referred to as "FIG. **3**". The hysteresis curves **300-a**, **300-b**, and **300-c** may each illustrate an example sensing process when a first, second, and third memory state is stored on a respective memory cell (e.g., the ferroelectric memory cell **105-a**). The hysteresis curves **300-a**, **300-b**, and **300-c** may depict a charge stored on a ferroelectric capacitor (e.g., capacitor **205** of FIG. **2**) as a function of voltage. A dielectric compensation technique, such as plate pulse technique, may be used to compensate for the ferroelectric dielectric intrinsic charge.

Example ferroelectric materials may include barium titanate (BaTiO_3), lead titanate (PbTiO_3), lead zirconium titanate (PZT), and strontium bismuth tantalate (SBT). The ferroelectric capacitors described herein may include these or other ferroelectric materials. Electric charge distribution within a ferroelectric capacitor may result in accumulation of a net charge at the ferroelectric material's surface that attracts opposite charge through the capacitor terminals. Thus, the respective charge is stored at the interface of the ferroelectric material and the capacitor terminals.

In some embodiments, ferroelectric material may maintain an electric charge distribution in the absence of an electric field. For example, the ferroelectric material may maintain a positive, neutral, or negative charge (i.e., three memory states) at neutral voltage. The ferroelectric material may realize such electric charge levels by receiving a respective programming or sensing voltage level. The respective sensing voltage levels may be applied according to the hysteresis curves **300-a**, **300-b**, or **300-c**, as will be appreciated. In some embodiments, the respective programming voltage levels may be similar to the respective sensing voltage levels and the operations may be opposite the sensing operation described below with respect to FIG. **3A**, FIG. **3B**, and FIG. **3C**.

Ferroelectric memory cell hysteresis curves, such as hysteresis curves **300-a**, **300-b**, and **300-c** may be described from the perspective of a single terminal of a ferroelectric capacitor (capacitor hereinafter). Positive charge may accumulate at the terminal of the capacitor when the ferroelectric material has a negative charge distribution. Similarly, neutral charge (e.g., approximately 0 net charge) may accumulate at the terminal of the capacitor when the ferroelectric material has a neutral charge distribution. Additionally, negative charge may accumulate at the terminal of the capacitor when the ferroelectric material has a positive charge distribution. It should be appreciated that in other embodiments, more than three charge distributions may be programmed and sensed from the ferroelectric memory cell. In such embodiments, multiple positive and/or negative charge distributions may be implemented.

The applied voltages in hysteresis curves **300-a**, **300-b**, and **300-c** may represent an applied voltage difference

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across the capacitor. Additionally, the applied voltages may be directional. For example, a positive voltage may be realized by applying a positive voltage to the terminal in question (e.g., a cell plate **230**) and maintaining the second terminal (e.g., a cell bottom **215**) at ground (or approximately zero volts (0V)). A negative voltage may be applied by maintaining the terminal in question at ground and applying a positive voltage to the second terminal. That is, positive voltages may be applied to negatively polarize the described terminal. Similarly, two positive voltages, two negative voltages, or any combination of positive and negative voltages may be applied to the appropriate capacitor terminals to generate the voltage difference shown in hysteresis curves **300-a**, **300-b**, and **300-c**.

The ferroelectric material may maintain a positive, neutral, or negative charge distribution at neutral voltage (i.e., a zero voltage difference between terminals of the capacitor) referring to respective memory states. For example, the memory cell may maintain a first memory state **305** (e.g., by maintaining positive charge distribution), a second memory state **310** (e.g., by maintaining neutral charge distribution), or a third memory state **315** (e.g., by maintaining negative charge distribution) when no voltage is applied across the terminals of the capacitor.

FIG. **3A** depicts a sensing operation of the first memory state **305** of a memory cell (e.g., the ferroelectric memory cell **105-a**) according to one embodiment of the present disclosure. The first memory state **305** may refer to a first charge domain in the memory cell. The sensing operation may include applying a sensing voltage **320-a** (e.g., first sensing voltage) to the ferroelectric material. Applying the sensing voltage **320-a** to the memory cell may result in an accumulated charge in the capacitor of the memory cell.

In different embodiments, a value of the accumulated charge may be slightly different due to different real-life variables of the memory cell. However, the sensing voltage **320-a** may be set to a predetermined value corresponding to an average net charge associated with sensing the first memory state **305**. Accordingly, a sensing area **325-a** may represent a range of acceptable accumulated charge values for successfully performing the sensing operation. It should be noted that the acceptable accumulated charge value and the sensing voltage **320-a** may be different in different embodiments.

By applying the sensing voltage **320-a**, the accumulated charge value may reach the sensing area **325-a** by following a path **340-a** using the hysteresis curve **300-a**. Subsequently, the sensing voltage **320-a** may be removed. In the depicted embodiment of FIG. **3A**, the accumulated charge value may follow the path **340-a** on the hysteresis curve **300-a** back to the first memory state **305** when the sensing voltage **320-a** is removed from the memory cell. In other embodiments, removing the sensing voltage **320-a** may result in a different memory state, such as second memory state **310** or third memory state **315**. The second memory state **310** and the third memory state **315** may refer to a second charge domain and a third charge domain in the memory cell, respectively, as will be appreciated.

Referring back to the embodiment of FIG. **3A**, the sensing operation may include measuring a net charge when the charge value tracks the hysteresis curve **300-a** via the path **340-a** from first memory state **305** to the sensing area **325-a** and back to the first memory state **305**. However, in different embodiments, the net charge may be different due to different characteristics of such embodiments. As such, a net charge spread **330-a** may represent a range of acceptable

charge values after applying and removing the sensing voltage **320-a** for successfully performing the sensing operation.

An average net charge **335-a** may represent an average differential charge level between the charge level of the first memory state **305** and the final state of the charge after applying and removing the sensing voltage **320-a** in different embodiments. That is, the average net charge **335-a** may be an average of the resulting net charges for successfully sensing the first memory state **305** in different embodiments. Accordingly, the memory array (e.g., memory array **100**) may sense the positive electric polarization of the stored charge (i.e., the first memory state **305**) by measuring the average net charge **335-a** and correlating the measured average net charge **335-a** and the applied sensing voltage **320-a**. The first memory state **305** may be referred to as remnant polarization (Pr) values. That is, the first memory state **305** may retain the respective polarization or charge distribution values after removing the external bias (e.g., voltage).

That said, the memory cell may include additional charges associated with a dielectric of the memory cell. For example, the dielectric may be a ferroelectric dielectric made from ferroelectric material. Thus, the memory cell may include a dielectric charge and a polarization charge. In some embodiments, the dielectric charge may correspond to or track the applied voltage. If left uncompensated, the dielectric charge may interfere with the relationship between the applied sensing voltage **320-a** and the accumulated charges.

Implementation and detection of the three memory states with the memory cell is achieved based at least in part on compensating for the ferroelectric dielectric charge. Compensating for the ferroelectric dielectric charge may result in a smaller charge distribution window for the net charge spread **330-a**. Subsequently, the smaller charge distribution window of the net charge spread **330-a** may result in wider distance between the average net charge **335-a** and an average net charges associated with sensing the second memory state **310** and the third memory state **315**, as will be appreciated.

Moreover, in different embodiments, the memory cell may maintain or destroy the initial memory state by performing the sense operation as discussed above. For example, upon removing the sensing voltage **320-a**, the net charge may follow a different path according to the hysteresis curve **300-a** to reach different charge levels and memory states. In the example described above with respect to FIG. 3A, the net charge of the memory cell may follow the depicted path **340-a** on the hysteresis curve **300-a** to reach the first memory state **305** at zero voltage potential. In a different example, the net charge of the memory cell may follow a different path to reach the second memory state **310** at zero voltage potential. In yet another example, the net charge of the memory cell may follow a different path to reach the third memory state **315** at zero voltage potential. In such examples, the respective memory array (e.g., the memory array **100**) may rewrite such destroyed memory state to the initial memory state (e.g., the first memory state **305**).

The memory cell may perform similar operations for writing (or rewriting) the first memory state **305**. For example, the memory array may perform the write operation by applying a voltage (e.g., similar or equal to the sensing voltage **320-a**) that may result in an accumulated charge value according to a path the hysteresis curve **300-a**. After removing the applied voltage, the charge value may follow a path on the hysteresis curve **300-a** until it reaches the first

memory state **305** at zero voltage. Moreover, the memory cell **105** may measure a resulting net charge and write a respective memory state to the respective capacitor by corresponding the measured net charge to the applied voltage.

FIG. 3B depicts a sensing operation of the second memory state **310** of the memory cell according to another embodiment of the present disclosure. Similar to the sensing operation of the first memory state **305**, the sensing operation may include applying a sensing voltage **320-b** (e.g., second sensing voltage) to the ferroelectric material. Applying the sensing voltage **320-b** to the memory cell may result in a respective accumulated charge in the capacitor of the memory cell. In different embodiments, a value of the accumulated charge may be slightly different due to different real-life variables of the memory cell. However, the sensing voltage **320-b** may be set to a predetermined value corresponding to an average net charge associated with sensing the second memory state **310**, as will be appreciated. Accordingly, a sensing area **325-b** may represent a range of acceptable accumulated charge values for successfully performing the sensing operation when sensing the second memory state **310**. It should be noted that the acceptable accumulated charge value and the sensing voltage **320-b** may be different in different embodiments.

By applying the sensing voltage **320-b**, the accumulated charge value may reach the sensing area **325-a** by following a path **340-b** using the hysteresis curve **300-b**. Subsequently, the sensing voltage **320-b** may be removed. In the depicted embodiment of FIG. 3B, the accumulated charge value may follow the path **340-b** on the hysteresis curve **300-b** to the first memory state **305** when the sensing voltage **320-b** is removed from the memory cell. In other embodiments, removing the sensing voltage **320-b** may result in a different memory state, such as back to the second memory state **310** or the third memory state **315**.

Referring back to the embodiment of FIG. 3B, the sensing operation may include measuring a net charge when the charge value tracks the hysteresis curve **300-b** via the path **340-b** from second memory state **310** to the sensing area **325-b** and subsequently to the first memory state **305**. However, in different embodiments, the net charge may be different due to different characteristics of such embodiments. As such, a net charge spread **330-b** may represent a range of acceptable charge values after applying and removing the sensing voltage **320-b** for successfully performing the sensing operation.

An average net charge **335-b** may represent an average differential charge level between the charge level of the second memory state **310** and the final state of the charge after applying and removing the sensing voltage **320-b** in different embodiments. That is, the average net charge **335-b** may be an average of the resulting net charges for successfully sensing the second memory state **310** in different embodiments. Accordingly, the memory array (e.g., memory array **100**) may sense the neutral electric polarization of the stored charge (i.e., the second memory state **310**) by measuring the average net charge **335-b** and correlating the measured average net charge **335-b** and the applied sensing voltage **320-b**.

As discussed above, the sense operation of the second memory state **310** may be destructive. That is, applying and removing the sensing voltage **320-b** to the memory cell may result in a final memory state different from the initial memory state. In the depicted example, the final memory state may be the first memory state **305**. As such, the memory cell may perform a re-write operation to restore the

initial state (i.e., second memory state **310**) to the memory cell after sensing the stored memory state. The second memory state **310** may also be referred to as remnant polarization (Pr) values. That is, the second memory state **310** may retain the respective polarization or charge distribution values after removing the external bias (e.g., voltage).

That said, the memory cell may include additional charges associated with a dielectric of the memory cell. For example, the dielectric may be a ferroelectric dielectric made from ferroelectric material. Thus, the memory cell may include a dielectric charge and a polarization charge. In some embodiments, the dielectric charge may correspond to or track the applied voltage. If left uncompensated, the dielectric charge may interfere with the relationship between the applied sensing voltage **320-b** and the accumulated charges.

Compensating for the ferroelectric dielectric charge may result in a smaller charge distribution window for the net charge spread **330-b**. Subsequently, the smaller charge distribution window of the net charge spread **330-b** may result in wider distance between the average net charge **335-b**, the average net charge **335-a** associated with the first memory state **305**, and an average net charge associated with the third memory state **315**, as will be appreciated.

Moreover, in different embodiments, upon removing the sensing voltage **320-b**, the net charge may follow a different path according to the hysteresis curve **300-b** to reach different charge levels and memory states. For example, the net charge of the memory cell may follow a different path to reach the second memory state **310** at zero voltage potential. In another example, the net charge of the memory cell may follow a different path to reach the third memory state **315** at zero voltage potential. In some examples, the respective memory array (e.g., the memory array **100**) may rewrite a destroyed memory state to the initial memory state (e.g., the second memory state **310**).

The memory cell may perform similar operations for writing (or rewriting) the second memory state **310**. For example, the memory array may perform the write operation by applying a voltage (e.g., similar or equal to the sensing voltage **320-b**) that may result in an accumulated charge value according to the hysteresis curve **300-b**. After removing the applied voltage, the charge value may follow a path on the hysteresis curve **300-b** until it reaches the second memory state **310** at zero voltage. Moreover, the memory cell **105** may measure a resulting net charge and write a respective memory state to the respective capacitor by corresponding the measured net charge to the applied voltage.

FIG. **3C** depicts a sensing operation of the third memory state **315** of the memory cell according to yet another embodiment of the present disclosure. Similar to the sensing operation of the first memory state **305** and the second memory state **310**, the sensing operation may include applying a sensing voltage **320-c** (e.g., third sensing voltage) to the ferroelectric material. Applying the sensing voltage **320-c** to the memory cell may result in a respective accumulated charge in the capacitor of the memory cell. In different embodiments, a value of the accumulated charge may be different due to different real-life variables of the memory cell. However, the sensing voltage **320-c** may be set to a predetermined value corresponding to an average net charge associated with sensing the third memory state **315**, as will be appreciated. Accordingly, a sensing area **325-c** may represent a range of acceptable accumulated charge values for successfully performing the sensing operation when sensing the third memory state **315**. It should be noted

that the acceptable accumulated charge value and the sensing voltage **320-c** may be different in different embodiments.

By applying the sensing voltage **320-c**, the accumulated charge value may reach the sensing area **325-c** by following a path **340-c** using the hysteresis curve **300-c**. Subsequently, the sensing voltage **320-c** may be removed. In the depicted embodiment of FIG. **3C**, the accumulated charge value may follow the path **340-c** on the hysteresis curve **300-c** to the first memory state **305** when the sensing voltage **320-c** is removed from the memory cell. In other embodiments, removing the sensing voltage **320-c** may result in a different memory state, such as the second memory state **310** or back to the third memory state **315**.

Referring back to the embodiment of FIG. **3C**, the sensing operation may include measuring a net charge when the charge value tracks the hysteresis curve **300-c** via the path **340-c** from third memory state **315** to the sensing area **325-c** and subsequently to the first memory state **305**. However, in different embodiments, the net charge may be different due to different characteristics of such embodiments. As such, a net charge spread **330-c** may represent a range of acceptable charge values after applying and removing the sensing voltage **320-c** for successfully performing the sensing operation.

An average net charge **335-c** may represent an average differential charge level between the charge level of the third memory state **315** and the final state of the charge after applying and removing the sensing voltage **320-c** in different embodiments. That is, the average net charge **335-c** may be an average of the resulting net charges for successfully sensing the third memory state **315** in different embodiments. Accordingly, the memory array (e.g., memory array **100**) may sense the negative electric polarization of the stored charge (i.e., the third memory state **315**) by measuring the average net charge **335-c** and correlating the measured average net charge **335-c** and the applied sensing voltage **320-c**. It should be appreciated that because the resulting memory state after performing the sense operation may be different in different embodiments, sensing the electric polarization may be with respect to different values. However, the hysteresis curve of such different embodiments may incorporate the similar shape when using a ferroelectric memory cell.

As discussed above, the sense operation of the second memory state **310** may be destructive. That is, applying and removing the sensing voltage **320-c** to the memory cell may result in a final memory state different from the initial memory state. In the depicted example, the final memory state may be the first memory state **305**. As such, the memory cell may perform a re-write operation to restore the initial state (i.e., third memory state **315**) to the memory cell after sensing the stored memory state. The third memory state **315** may also be referred to as remnant polarization (Pr) values. That is, the third memory state **315** may retain the respective polarization or charge distribution values after removing the external bias (e.g., voltage).

Similar to the embodiments discussed above, the memory cell may include additional charges associated with a dielectric of the memory cell. For example, the dielectric may be a ferroelectric dielectric made from ferroelectric material. Thus, the memory cell may include a dielectric charge and a polarization charge. In some embodiments, the dielectric charge may correspond to or track the applied voltage. If left uncompensated, the dielectric charge may interfere with the relationship between the applied sensing voltage **320-c** and the accumulated charges.

Compensating for the ferroelectric dielectric charge may result in a smaller charge distribution window for the net charge spread **330-c**. Subsequently, the smaller charge distribution window of the net charge spread **330-c** may result in wider distance between the average net charge **335-c**, the average net charge **335-a** associated with sensing the first memory state **305**, and the average net charge **335-b** associated with sensing the second memory state **310**.

Moreover, in different embodiments, upon removing the sensing voltage **320-c**, the net charge may follow a different path according to the hysteresis curve **300-c** to reach different charge levels and memory states. For example, the net charge of the memory cell may follow a different path to reach the second memory state **310** at zero voltage potential. In another example, the net charge of the memory cell may follow a different path to reach the third memory state **315** at zero voltage potential. In some examples, the respective memory array (e.g., the memory array **100**) may rewrite a destroyed memory state to the initial memory state (e.g., the third memory state **315**).

The memory cell may perform similar operations for writing (or rewriting) the third memory state **315**. For example, the memory array may perform the write operation by applying a voltage (e.g., similar or equal to the sensing voltage **320-c**) that may result in an accumulated charge value according to the hysteresis curve **300-c**. After removing the applied voltage, the charge value may follow a path on the hysteresis curve **300-c** until it reaches the third memory state **315** at zero voltage. Moreover, the memory cell **105** may measure a resulting net charge and write a respective memory state to the respective capacitor by corresponding the measured net charge to the applied voltage.

FIG. **4A** and FIG. **4B** illustrate a graph **400** and a graph **455**, respectively, and may be collectively referred to as "FIG. **4**". The graph **400** may be associated with a sensing operation before dielectric charge compensation, and the graph **455** may be associated with another sensing operation after dielectric charge compensation. In one embodiment, the graph **400** and the graph **455** may both illustrate a relationship between sensing voltages associated with each of the three memory states described above and an associated bit error rate.

Referring now to the FIG. **4A**, the graph **400** may include a voltage distribution bar **405** and a bit error rate distribution bar **410** to illustrate a respective bit error ratio when applying a respective sensing voltage. The graph **400** may illustrate the relationship between the sensing voltages, such as the sensing voltages **320-a**, **320-b**, and **320-c**, and the respective bit error rate distributions during a sensing operation. The voltage distribution bar **405** may illustrate a range of voltage values associated with the respective sensing voltages of different memory states.

In some embodiments, a voltage value of the sensing voltage **320-a** may be within a first voltage distribution **430** range. Moreover, a voltage value of the sensing voltage **320-b** may be within a second voltage distribution **435** range. Furthermore, a voltage value of the sensing voltage **320-c** may be within a third voltage distribution **440** range. As mentioned above with respect to FIG. **3**, the sensing voltages **320-a**, **320-b**, and **320-c** may be discussed with respect to an average acceptable voltage for successful memory sense operation. However, the first voltage distribution **430**, the second voltage distribution **435**, and the third voltage distribution **440** may each include a range of acceptable sensing voltages associated with the respective memory states. The bit error rate distribution bar **410** may indicate a

likelihood of failure associated with the respective sensing voltages and the respective voltage distributions.

The graph **400** may include a first memory state error distribution **415**, a second memory state error distribution **420**, and a third memory state error distribution **425**. The first memory state error distribution **415** may correspond the first voltage distribution **430** with the respective bit error rate. Moreover, the second memory state error distribution **420** may correspond the second voltage distribution **435** with the respective bit error rate. Furthermore, the third memory state error distribution **425** may correspond the third voltage distribution **440** with the respective bit error rate.

As mentioned above, the graph **400** may illustrate the first memory state error distribution **415**, the second memory state error distribution **420**, and the third memory state error distribution **425** before compensation for the dielectric charge. The dielectric charges may result in an increased range of voltages at the first voltage distribution **430**, second voltage distributions **435**, and the third voltage distributions **440**. As such, the first memory state **305**, the second memory state **310**, and the third memory state **315** may include overlapping boundaries **445** between the first voltage distribution **430**, second voltage distribution **435**, and the third voltage distribution **440**. The overlapping boundaries **445** may be undesirable and may cause erroneous memory state sensing operations. In one specific example, a differential voltage **450** between the first memory state error distribution **415** and the third memory state error distribution **425**, at zero bit error rate, may be 561 milli-volts. The differential voltage **450** may not be sufficient for distinctly fitting the second memory state error distribution **420**.

FIG. **4B** depicts the graph **455** that may include the first memory state error distribution **415**, the second memory state error distribution **420**, and the third memory state error distribution **425** after compensation for the dielectric charge. Compensating for the dielectric charges may result in reduced range of voltages for switching between the memory states. The first voltage distribution **430**, the second voltage distribution **435**, and the third voltage distribution **440** may attain the respective memory states using a reduced range of voltage distributions. As such, a differential voltage **460** between the first memory state error distribution **415** and the third memory state error distribution **425**, at zero bit error rate, may become sufficient for distinctly fitting the second memory state error distribution **420**. That is, an increased voltage distance between the first memory state error distribution **415** and the third memory state error distribution **425** may facilitate fitting an intermediary memory state (e.g., the second memory state **310**) with no overlapping boundaries between the memory states. For example, the differential voltage **460** may become 575 milli-volts.

That said, the graph **455** may include a first reference voltage **465** and a second reference voltage **470** between the programming voltage distributions. The first reference voltage **465** may be a threshold voltage between the first voltage distribution **430** and the second voltage distribution **435**. The second reference voltage **470** may be another threshold voltage between the second voltage distribution **435** and the third voltage distribution **440**. For example, the first reference voltage **465** may be associated with a first latch circuit and the second reference voltage **470** may be associated with a second latch circuit to attain the three memory states, as discussed above with respect to FIG. **2**. As such, the memory array may distinctively sense the first memory state **305**, the second memory state **310**, and the third memory states **315**.

In other embodiments, more than two reference voltages may be used to identify a different number of memory states in a respective memory cell.

Referring now to FIG. 5, a graph 500 may illustrate a voltage ramp for programming three distinct memory states on the memory cell described above, with respect to some embodiments of the present disclosure. The graph 500 may illustrate three voltage levels for programming a memory cell (e.g., the memory cell 105). For example, the memory array 100 may maintain or switch a current memory state between the three memory states (e.g., the memory states 305, 310, and 315) using the voltage ramp of graph 500, as will be appreciated. It should be noted that in other embodiments, different voltage ramps with different programming voltage levels may be used.

The graph 500 may include the voltage distribution bar 405 and a time bar 505. The graph 500 may illustrate different voltage levels for switching between the three memory states using the first voltage distribution 430, the second voltage distribution 435, and the third voltage distribution 440 with respect to time. The first voltage distribution 430, the second voltage distribution 435, and the third voltage distribution 440 may correspond to the sensing voltages 320 as described above with respect to FIGS. 3 and 4.

With the foregoing in mind, the memory array 100 may maintain a currently stored memory state by providing a first voltage 510. Moreover, the memory array 100 may switch to an adjacent charge domain (e.g., another memory state) using a second voltage 515 that is between the first reference voltage 465 and the second reference voltage 470. Furthermore, the memory array 100 may switch to another charge domain (e.g., yet another memory state) using a third voltage 520. For example, the first voltage may be zero, the second voltage 515 may switch half of an overall charge dipole of the memory cell, and the third voltage may flip the charge dipole to an opposite charge dipole.

In some embodiments, the first voltage 510 and the third voltage 520 may correspond to voltage levels associated with flipping a value of a memory cell with two memory states. For example, in a memory cell with logic memory states 0 and 1, the respective memory array may maintain the current memory state by providing the first voltage 510 (e.g., 0 volts) or flip the memory state by providing the third voltage 520 (e.g., 1.5 volts). However, providing the second voltage 515 may achieve the intermediary memory state associated with the second voltage distribution 435 according to voltage ramp portion 525. That is, the memory array 100 may maintain a first memory state 305 of the memory cell of FIG. 3A by providing the first voltage 510 (e.g., zero volts), switch to the second memory state 310 by providing the second voltage 515, or switch to the third memory state 315 by providing the third voltage 520.

The memory array may program the memory cell according to the hysteresis curves 300 that are defined with respect to FIG. 3. The charge domains may refer to memory cell dipoles, such that the current memory state may be changed by switching all or half of the dipoles to switch one charge domain or flip the memory state to the other charge domain. In some embodiments, the first voltage 510, the second voltage 515, and the third voltage 520 may be predefined.

With the foregoing in mind, FIGS. 6 and 7 may provide two methods of programming the memory cell (e.g., the memory cell 105 and/or the ferroelectric memory cell 105-a) using three distinct memory states. Referring now to method 600 of FIG. 6, a method of implementing a specific charge amount associated with the first memory state 305, the

second memory state 310, or the third memory state 315 may be described. The method 600 may be referred to as a pulse width timing method, wherein the applied voltage of the cell biasing signal is constant and the pulse width timing is adjusted or modulated, as will be appreciated.

The pulse width timing method 600 may adjust a pulse width timing for programming a memory cell with three memory states (e.g., memory states 305, 310, and 315). As such, the memory array 100 may program the memory cell by providing programming pulses. The memory array 100 may provide the programming pulses using a fixed voltage for changing the memory state and may adjust the timing of the programming pulse width, as will be appreciated.

At block 605, the memory array 100 may set a pulse timing to an initial value t_{pulse} . The initial pulse time may be set to a minimum value. In specific embodiments, the minimum initial pulse time value is 40 nano seconds. At decision block 610, the pulse width timing method 600 may determine whether the first memory state 305, the second memory state 310, or the third memory state 315 is being programmed.

At decision block 610, the memory array 100 may determine that the first memory state 305 or the third memory state 315 is being programmed. As such, the memory array 100 may proceed to perform certain operations at block 615. At block 615, the memory array 100 may program the memory cell using a respective voltage level. For example, the memory array 100 may provide the first voltage 510 for programming the first memory state 305 or provide the third voltage 520 for programming the third memory state 315.

Alternatively, at decision block 610, the memory array 100 may determine that the second memory state 310 is being programmed. The memory array 100 may then proceed to block 620 to program the second memory state 310. Programming the second memory state 310 may be accomplished by providing a programming voltage (e.g., the second voltage 515) between a minimum (e.g., the first voltage 510) and a maximum (e.g., the third voltage 520) voltage associated with programming the memory cell. In some embodiments, because of narrow intermediary error distribution range (as described above with respect to FIG. 4) for programming the second memory state 310, additional measures may be used to verify successful programming of the second memory state 310. As such, at block 620, the memory array 100 may add a time (dt) to the initial t_{pulse} programming time.

At block 625, the memory array 100 may program the memory cell by providing the programming voltage using the programming time t_{pulse} . In some embodiments, the memory array 100 may program the memory cell using the sensing operations described above with respect to FIG. 3. The memory array 100 may then verify whether the memory cell has attained the second memory state 310 by providing the programming voltage another time and sensing the stored charge value at decision block 630. In some embodiments, the sensing may be performed according to operations discussed above with respect to FIG. 3. That said, in some embodiments, the sensing operations may be memory destructive and re-programming the memory state may be necessary after sensing the second memory state 310 is successfully programmed.

At decision block 630, the memory array 100 may determine that the second memory state 310 is not successfully programmed. For example, the memory array 100 may sense a charge level different from a predetermined charge level associated with the second memory state 310. On such occasion, the memory array 100 may re-try programming

the memory cell with the second memory state **310** using a longer programming pulse. Accordingly, the memory array **100** may return to the block **620** to add an additional programming time (dt) to the tpulse programming time.

Subsequently, the memory array **100** may proceed to the block **625** to program the memory cell using the same programming voltage and the increased tpulse programming time. At decision block **630**, the memory array **100** may then verify whether the memory cell has attained the second memory state **310** by providing the programming voltage again, and sensing the stored charge value. The memory array **100** may loop back to the block **620** if the memory cell has failed to attain the second memory state **310**. The memory array **100** may repeat this process of adding additional programming time (dt) until the second memory state **310** is attained by the memory cell.

Alternatively, at the decision block **630**, the memory cell **105** may verify that the second memory state **310** is stored on the memory cell. As such, the memory array **100** may proceed to block **635**. At block **635**, the memory array **100** may re-program the memory cell. The memory array **100** may re-program the memory cell using the tpulse programming time and programming voltage after sensing (and verifying) storage of the second memory state **310** on the memory cell. As such, the memory cell may attain the second memory state **310**. The memory array **100** may then finish the pulse width timing method **600** at block **640**.

Referring now to method **700** of FIG. 7, another method of implementing a specific charge amount associated with the first memory state **305**, the second memory state **310**, or the third memory state **315** may be described. The method **700** may be implemented by adjusting a programming voltage, wherein the applied programming voltage of the cell biasing signal is adjusted or modulated, while the pulse width timing is constant, as will be appreciated. The memory array **100** may program the memory cell by providing programming pulses. The memory array **100** may provide the programming pulses using a fixed pulse time for changing the memory state and may adjust the pulse voltage, as will be appreciated.

At block **705**, the memory array **100** may set a pulse voltage to an initial pulse voltage value V_{pulse} . The initial pulse voltage may be set to a minimum value. In specific embodiments, the minimum pulse voltage value may be close or equal to the first reference voltage **465** as described above. At decision block **710**, the method **700** may determine whether the first memory state **305**, the second memory state **310**, or the third memory state **315** is being programmed.

At decision block **710**, the memory array **100** may determine that the first memory state **305** or the third memory state **315** is being programmed. As such, the memory array **100** may proceed to perform certain operations at block **715**. At block **715**, the memory array **100** may program the memory cell using a respective voltage level. For example, the memory array **100** may provide the first voltage **510** for programming the first memory state **305** or provide the third voltage **520** for programming the third memory state **315**.

Alternatively, at decision block **710**, the memory array **100** may determine that the second memory state **310** is being programmed. The memory array **100** may then proceed to block **720** to program the second memory state **310**. Programming the second memory state **310** may be by the way of providing the programming voltage V_{pulse} for a predetermined time period. In some embodiments, because of narrow intermediary error distribution range (as described above with respect to FIG. 4) for programming the second

memory state **310**, additional measures may be used to verify successful programming of the second memory state **310**. As such, at block **720**, the memory array **100** may add a voltage (dV) to the initial V_{pulse} .

At block **725**, the memory array **100** may program the memory cell by providing the programming voltage V_{pulse} using the predetermined programming time. In some embodiments, the memory array **100** may program the memory cell using the sensing operations described above with respect to FIG. 3. The memory array **100** may then verify whether the memory cell has attained the second memory state **310** by providing the V_{pulse} another time and sensing the stored charge value at decision block **730**. In some embodiments, the sensing may be performed according to operations discussed above with respect to FIG. 3. That said, in some embodiments, the sensing operations may be memory destructive and re-programming the memory state may be necessary after sensing the second memory state **310** is successfully programmed.

At decision block **730**, the memory array **100** may determine that the second memory state **310** is not successfully programmed. For example, the memory array **100** may sense a charge level different from a predetermined charge level associated with the second memory state **310**. In such occasion, the memory array **100** may re-try programming the memory cell with the second memory state **310** using a higher programming voltage. Accordingly, the memory array **100** may return to the block **720** to add an additional programming voltage (dV) to the V_{pulse} .

Subsequently, the memory array **100** may proceed to the block **725** to program the memory cell using the increased V_{pulse} and the predetermined programming time. At decision block **730**, the memory array **100** may then verify whether the memory cell has attained the second memory state **310** by providing the V_{pulse} again, and sensing the stored charge value. The memory array **100** may loop back to the block **720** if the memory cell has failed to attain the second memory state **310**. The memory array **100** may repeat this process of adding additional programming voltage (dV) until the second memory state **310** is attained by the memory cell. However, the V_{pulse} may not exceed second reference voltage **470**.

Alternatively, at the decision block **730**, the memory cell **105** may verify that the second memory state **310** is stored on the memory cell. As such, the memory array **100** may proceed to block **735**. At block **735**, the memory array **100** may re-program the memory cell. The memory array **100** may re-program the memory cell using the V_{pulse} and the predetermined programming time after sensing (and verifying) storage of the second memory state **310** on the memory cell. As such, the memory cell may attain the second memory state **310**. The memory array **100** may then finish the method **700** at block **740**. It should be noted that in different embodiments, similar methods may be used for programming more than three memory states on a memory cell. Also, in different embodiments, other programming methods may be used for programming more than two memory states in a memory cell.

With these technical effects in mind, multiple memory devices may be included on a memory module, thereby enabling the memory devices to be communicatively coupled to the processing circuitry as a unit. For example, a dual in-line memory module (DIMM) may include a printed circuit board (PCB) and multiple memory devices. Memory modules respond to commands from a memory controller communicatively coupled to a client device or a host device via a communication network. For example, memory mod-

ules may store one of three or more memory states on one or more memory devices. Or in some cases, a memory controller may be used on the host-side of a memory-host interface; for example, a processor, microcontroller, field programmable gate array (FPGA), application-specific integrated circuit (ASIC), or the like may each include a memory controller.

This communication network may enable data communication there between and, thus, the client device to utilize hardware resources accessible through the memory controller. Based at least in part on user input to the client device, processing circuitry of the memory controller may perform one or more operations to facilitate the retrieval or transmission of data using multiple memory states between the client device and the memory devices. Data communicated between the client device and the memory devices may be used for a variety of purposes including, but not limited to, presentation of a visualization to a user through a graphical user interface (GUI) at the client device, processing operations, calculations, or the like. Thus, with this in mind, the above-described improvements to memory, memory controller operations, and memory writing operations may manifest as improvements in visualization quality (e.g., speed of rendering, quality of rendering), improvements in processing operations, improvements in calculations, or the like.

The specific embodiments described above have been shown by way of example, and it should be understood that these embodiments may be susceptible to various modifications and alternative forms. It should be further understood that the claims are not intended to be limited to the particular forms disclosed, but rather to cover all modifications, equivalents, and alternatives falling within the spirit and scope of this disclosure.

The techniques presented and claimed herein are referenced and applied to material objects and concrete examples of a practical nature that demonstrably improve the present technical field and, as such, are not abstract, intangible or purely theoretical. Further, if any claims appended to the end of this specification contain one or more elements designated as “means for [perform]ing [a function] . . .” or “step for [perform]ing [a function] . . .”, it is intended that such elements are to be interpreted under 35 U.S.C. 112(f). However, for any claims containing elements designated in any other manner, it is intended that such elements are not to be interpreted under 35 U.S.C. 112(f).

What is claimed is:

1. An apparatus, comprising:

a memory array comprising a plurality of memory cells, wherein at least one memory cell of the plurality of memory cells maintains a first charge amount associated with a first memory state; and

a memory controller configured to compensate for a dielectric charge associated with the at least one memory cell and provide a programming voltage to the at least one memory cell, wherein the programming voltage is associated with programming the at least one memory cell to acquire a target memory state by switching between the first memory state, a second memory state, and a third memory state, wherein switching between the first memory state, the second memory state, and the third memory state is based on compensating for the dielectric charge associated with the at least one memory cell, and wherein the at least one memory cell is configured to acquire the second memory state by accumulating a second charge amount

and is configured to acquire the third memory state by accumulating a third charge amount.

2. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the programming voltage is based at least in part on the first memory state and the target memory state.

3. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the memory controller is configured to provide the programming voltage according to a hysteresis curve, wherein the hysteresis curve comprises a relationship between the first charge amount, a charge amount associated with the target memory state, and the programming voltage.

4. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the first memory state comprise a negative charge amount, the second memory state comprise a neutral charge amount, and the third memory state comprise a positive charge amount.

5. The apparatus of claim 4, wherein the memory controller is configured to provide:

a first programming voltage below a first reference voltage to maintain the first memory state;

a second programming voltage between the first reference voltage and a second reference voltage for switching to the second memory state, wherein the second reference voltage comprises a value higher than the first reference voltage; and

a third programming voltage higher than the first reference voltage and the second reference voltage for switching to the third memory state.

6. The apparatus of claim 5, wherein the first programming voltage is approximately 0 volts and the third programming voltage is approximately 1.5 volts.

7. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the at least one memory cell of the plurality of memory cells comprises dielectric material accumulating the dielectric charge during programming of the at least one memory cell that increases a bit error ratio for acquiring the target memory state when providing the programming voltage, and wherein the memory controller is configured to prevent accumulation of the dielectric charges by the dielectric material to compensate for the dielectric charges of the dielectric material using a dielectric compensation scheme.

8. The apparatus of claim 7, wherein compensating for the dielectric charges of the dielectric material reduces the bit error ratio for acquiring the target memory state when providing the programming voltage and facilitates programming the at least one memory cell to acquire a target memory state by switching between the first memory state, the second memory state, and the third memory state.

9. The apparatus of claim 8, wherein compensating for the dielectric charges of the dielectric material facilitates programming the at least one memory cell to acquire a target memory state by switching between more than three memory states.

10. The apparatus of claim 8, wherein the dielectric compensation scheme is a plate pulse technique.

11. A memory device, comprising:

a memory array comprising a plurality of memory cells, wherein at least one memory cell of the plurality of memory cells is configured to store an initial memory state of more than two memory states, wherein storing the initial memory state comprises storing a charge amount associated with the initial memory state on the at least one memory cell and compensating for a dielectric charge of the at least one memory cell, wherein each memory state of the more than two memory states is associated with a different charge amount stored on the at least one memory cell, wherein

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each different charge amount is based on compensating for the dielectric charge of the at least one memory cell; and

a memory controller configured to access the at least one memory cell by providing a sensing voltage to sense the stored charge amount, wherein the sensing voltage is based at least in part on the initial memory state stored on the at least one memory cell and is based at least in part on compensation of the dielectric charge of the at least one memory cell.

12. The memory device of claim 11, wherein the memory controller is configured to provide the sensing voltage according to a ferroelectric memory cell hysteresis curve, wherein the hysteresis curve comprises a relationship between a charge amount associated with the initial memory state and the sensing voltage and is based at least in part on compensation of the dielectric charge of the at least one memory cell.

13. The memory device of claim 12, wherein the at least one memory cell is configured to store one of a first memory state, a second memory state, and a third memory state, and wherein accessing the first memory state comprises sensing a negative charge amount, accessing the second memory state comprises sensing a neutral charge amount that is higher than the negative charge amount, and accessing the third memory state comprises sensing a positive charge amount that is higher than the negative charge amount and the neutral charge amount.

14. The memory device of claim 11, wherein the memory array is configured to compensate for a dielectric charge associated with the at least one memory cell using a plate pulse technique.

15. A method for programming a memory cell of a plurality of memory cells of a ferroelectric memory array by performing operations by a memory controller of the ferroelectric memory array, wherein the operations comprise:

setting an initial programming time to a programming pulse;

determining, by the ferroelectric memory controller, whether a first memory state, a second memory state, or a third memory state is being programmed, wherein the memory cell is configured to store one of the first memory state, the second memory state, and the third memory state, and wherein the first memory state is associated with storing a negative charge amount, the third memory state is associated with storing a positive charge amount, and the second memory state is associated with storing a neutral charge amount less than the positive charge amount and more than the negative charge amount;

adding first additional programming time to the programming pulse when the ferroelectric memory cell is configured to program the second memory state;

programming the memory cell to acquire the second memory state using the programming pulse;

verifying whether the second memory state is successfully acquired by the memory cell;

when the ferroelectric memory cell fails to successfully acquire the second memory state:

adding second additional programming time to the programming pulse; and

programming the memory cell to acquire the second memory state using the programming pulse; and

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when the ferroelectric memory cell fails to successfully acquire the second memory state:

re-programming the memory cell to acquire the second memory state using the programming pulse.

16. The method of claim 15, wherein the operations comprise verifying whether the second memory state is successfully acquired by the memory cell after programming the memory cell with second additional programming time when the ferroelectric memory cell fails to successfully acquire the second memory state.

17. The method of claim 16, wherein the operations comprise adding third additional programming time to the programming pulse and programming the memory cell to acquire the second memory state using the programming pulse.

18. A method for programming a memory cell of a plurality of memory cells of a ferroelectric memory array by performing operations by a memory controller of the ferroelectric memory array, the operations comprise:

setting an initial programming voltage to a programming pulse;

determining, by the ferroelectric memory controller, whether a first memory state, a second memory state, or a third memory state is being programmed, wherein the memory cell is configured to store one of the first memory state, the second memory state, and the third memory state, and wherein the first memory state is associated with storing a negative charge amount, the third memory state is associated with storing a positive charge amount, and the second memory state is associated with storing a neutral charge amount less than the positive charge amount and more than the negative charge amount;

adding first additional programming voltage to the programming pulse when the ferroelectric memory cell is configured to program the second memory state;

programming the memory cell to acquire the second memory state using the programming pulse;

verifying whether the second memory state is successfully acquired by the memory cell;

when the ferroelectric memory cell fails to successfully acquire the second memory state:

adding second additional programming voltage to the programming pulse; and

programming the memory cell to acquire the second memory state using the programming pulse; and

when the ferroelectric memory cell fails to successfully acquire the second memory state:

re-programming the memory cell to acquire the second memory state using the programming pulse.

19. The method of claim 18, wherein the operations comprise verifying whether the second memory state is successfully acquired by the memory cell after programming the memory cell with second additional programming voltage when the ferroelectric memory cell fails to successfully acquire the second memory state.

20. The method of claim 19, wherein the operations comprise adding third additional programming voltage to the programming pulse and programming the memory cell to acquire the second memory state using the programming pulse.

* * * * *

UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE
CERTIFICATE OF CORRECTION

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INVENTOR(S) : Daniele Vimercati

Page 1 of 1

It is certified that error appears in the above-identified patent and that said Letters Patent is hereby corrected as shown below:

In the Specification

In Column 4, Line 67, please delete “memory state my include a charge” and insert --memory state may include a charge--, therefor.

In Column 5, Line 6, please delete “according to acquire a target memory state” and insert --to acquire a target memory state--, therefor.

Signed and Sealed this
Third Day of May, 2022



Katherine Kelly Vidal
Director of the United States Patent and Trademark Office